

木塚ネロ
Kizuka Nero

〜夢狂いの魔術師〜

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二度目の勇者は
復讐の
道を
嗤い歩む



MFコミックス

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MFフロンティア

NIDOME NO YUUSHA

– Path of Vengeance While Laughing –

- Volume 2 -

-Author-
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真空





ユーミス=エルミア



シュリア



ミナリス

「本当、格好悪すぎて
誰にも見せられねえな」

宇景海人



ウサギの獣人
ミナリス

復讐



勇者
宇景海人

復讐

共犯

キャラクター
相関図



人族至上主義の村娘
ルーシャ

姉妹



『緋の瞳』の持ち主
シュリア

海人の一度目の時の
主なパーティーメンバー



魔術師
ユームス



王女
アレシア



商人
グロンド



聖女
メテリア

「なあ、お前たちの命はさ、
俺の天秤を傾けられるほど
重いのか？」



「姉様は

妻

です」

努力家で、

優しくで、

インエル・コー

のことも

助けでくれました！」





ミナリス

シュリア

「さあ、退屈させないでくださいよっ。
くふくふくふく」

「月を眺めるのはまたあとにするのです。
きっと、赤い血はこの空によく映えるのですよ」



超絶プリチーな名前じゃろ？」

「妾の名はレティシア。」

魔王

レティシア＝ルウ＝ハールストン

Leticia Lew Harston



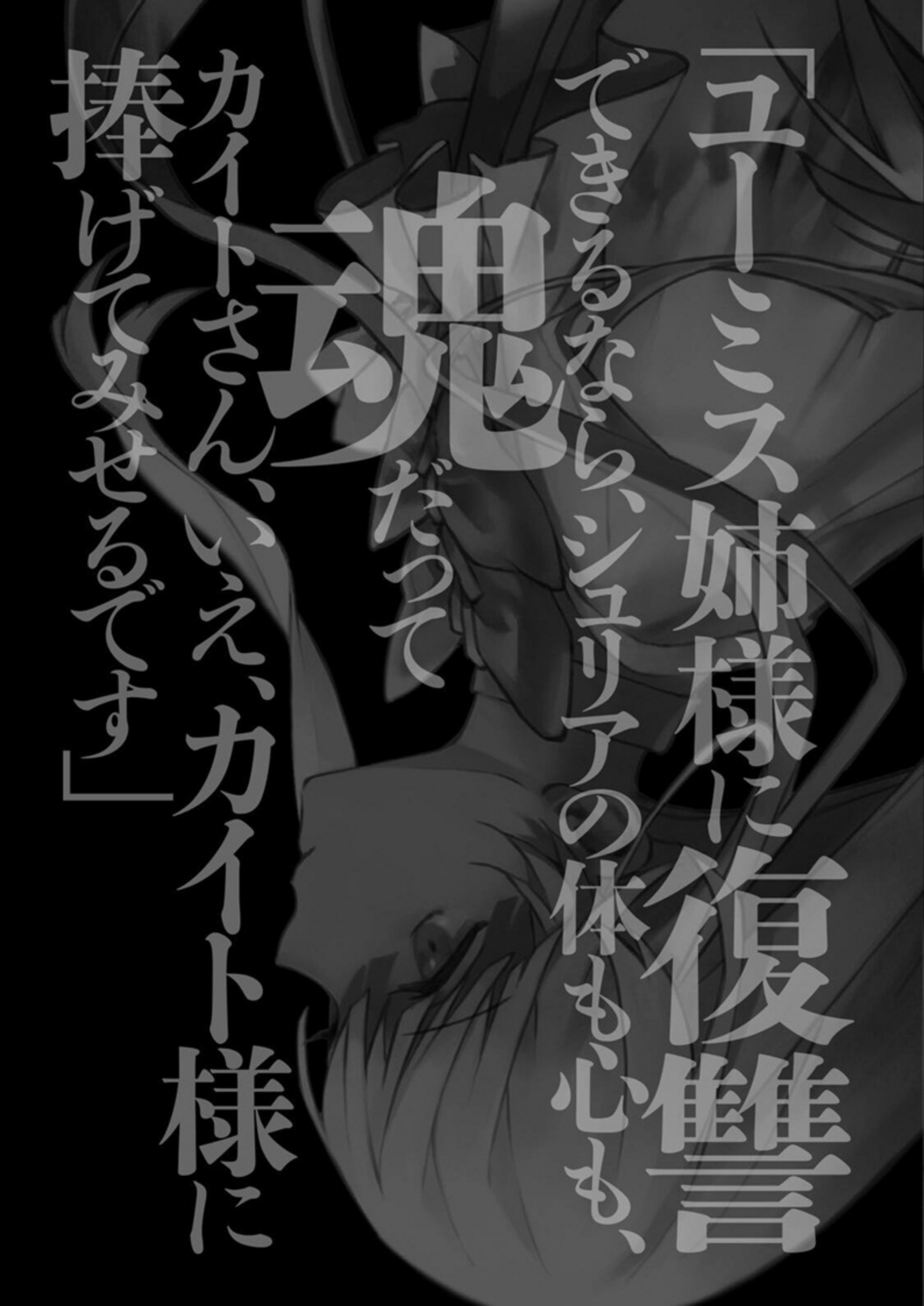
癒

してみせます」

「覚悟

していただくわい。

苦しんでも、苦しんでも、



「ユース姉様に復讐
てきるなら、シユリアの体も心も、
由良だつて
カイトさん、いえ、カイト様に
捧げてみせるです」

(traitorAIZEN: If you're wondering why I included volume 3 illustrations, this volume 2 of WN overlaps with most of the volume 3 LN and a bit of Volume 4)

Prologue

I think that it must be a very happy thing to live one's life while being fooled until its last moment.

If one stays happy and thinks life is happy without ever being aware of the dark side of it, things will come to a happy conclusion.

A happy ending, just like in the world of fairy tales.

Because people who die have no way of knowing about how the story continues afterwards.

That's why –

...However.

Despite that, I feel glad that I am able to know what happens next.

Inside the earth where the ground's surface has collapsed, I am still alive.

Ah, in the end, I suppose I do not mind either way.

It was simply only that kind of story, right from the beginning.

Whether I am a human or a monster, whether I change or do not change –

The pieces of my broken heart are screaming at me to do it anyway.

The happiness I can never get back, the irrational things that happened.

My dignity that was robbed from me, the depths of the hell that I was cast into.

Even so, I still have time to compensate for those with broken laughter.

That is why I will still laugh at the world with the cracked, crumbled heart that I am barely holding together; that is why I took that hand.

...Even if this is the path of a demon that I am walking on.

TLN: This part is narrated in a polite/formal tone, and if I had to guess, probably by a female character (though it might not be). I thought it was Princess Alesia at first since the tone is quite similar to hers, but it seems that's probably not the case (judging from the contents of this section and also the pronoun used here is different from the one she uses.) I'm leaving this information here since I can't really convey this through the translation alone.

Chapter 1

The Hero On A Hot, Bitter Night Watch

A month has already passed since we left the royal capital.

Minnalis and I have been walking along the highway at a leisurely pace.

We walk and walk. We simply walk on.

“Isn’t it really the best to slowly feed on something and then kill it?” (Minnalis)

“You really like that, don’t you, Minnalis? For me, thinking about how much the enemy is suffering is more important than the method of killing him. There are guys who won’t yield under physical pain or don’t even feel it in the first place, after all. There would be no point then. Given that, the number one thing you should never do is kill the enemy when he’s unconscious.” (Kaito)

“You’re right about that. We must have them suffer and regret as they die. They must die wearing twisted expressions...” (Minnalis)

The two of us walk the highway chatting about these kinds of things.

Incidentally, Minnalis isn’t hiding her beast-ears or tail right now, so her ears are bobbing up and down with every step she takes.

Of course, this is only the case because we have separated ourselves from the royal capital.

Citizens of the Aurelia kingdom have a tendency of disliking beast-people, but it’s not as if every single human in the nation is prejudiced against them. In fact, many beast-person adventurers and such regularly come and go in towns and villages near the national border, and they can obtain citizenships and live normal lives.

The only ones who truly hate the beast-people from the bottom of their hearts are the royal family and nobles who are part of the privileged class, and even the majority of them have never even seen a beast-person in person. They’ve simply decided that

beast-people are inferior creatures to themselves and hate them for that reason alone.

That's the reason beast-people are treated so badly in the royal capital, and because of this situation, beast-people are often bought and sold in secret around noblemen with certain tastes.

In that regard, you can say that Minnalis was extremely unlucky. The village she was born in had been very prejudiced even among other villages that happen to have many people who hated beast-men.

That's why we only encountered a small number of beast-person adventurers as we traveled along the highway from the royal capital.

Furthermore, if you don't have a personal dislike for beast-people, Minnalis is quite the beautiful woman.

Having come this far, there are almost no beast-person-haters here. There is now an established cycle where the men among the merchants and adventurers we encounter from time to time become fascinated by her, notice the slave-mark on her neck, glare at me enviously and then leave dejectedly as Minnalis gives them a glare of absolute zero temperature.

Those that had women accompanying them received absolute-zero glares from them as well. What masochistic behavior.

"At any rate, it seems that we're starting to encounter lots of people, aren't we?" (Minnalis)

"Yeah, because we'll be arriving in Ermia soon. Its population is around the same size as the royal capital, and there are a lot of requests to gather monster materials to be used for research." (Kaito)

"I see. That explains why there are so many people who appear to be adventurers." (Minnalis)

We have traveled from the royal capital, stopping by at numerous cities along the way, and now our destination, the college town of [Ermia], is just a little further.

If we keep walking along this road that is surrounded by forests on both sides, we'll probably reach it in two or three more days.

Bright rays of sunlight pour onto the road, lending itself to the tranquil atmosphere of this place. I had no interest in these kinds of things in my original world, but I suppose a peaceful walk through the woods is something like this.

This thought wanders aimlessly through my mind as I walk along the road.



“ ... ”

At night, after preparing a simple campground and feasting on the food that Minnalis made, we decided to rest early while taking turns to keep watch.

“Nnh, nnh...” (Minnalis)

Lying next to the fire with a blanket over her, Minnalis turns over in her sleep.

It's not like I'm not tired as well, but even though this is a highway, there's no telling when a monster might come and attack us. And on top of that, we're only traveling with the two of us. Since we don't have large numbers of people, it's even more likely that monsters will attack us.

When I was living a life on the run during my first time through this world, I would set up barriers before sleeping so there was no need for someone to keep watch even when sleeping outside, but right now my MP is too scarce and I'm not even capable of creating a barrier that will hold strong until morning anyway.

“Ugeh, it's hot and bitter...” (Kaito)

I sip at a drink with medicinal plants dissolved in water that I've boiled with the fire.

As I keep myself awake with the drink, its intensely bitter flavor stimulates my tongue and its scalding-hot temperature almost burns my mouth. I can't help but to grimace.

This medicinal herb known as Fuzzy grass is a strange fantasy plant that helps to alleviate fatigue and drowsiness when dissolved in hot water and consumed.

As it can be found growing in the wild in large quantities anywhere you go, it can be obtained in the cities for cheap and is a powerful ally for novice adventurers. But it has a bitter flavor that is as if all of the bitterness of coffee, green tea and 100% pure

chocolate has been concentrated to create it, and it has no effect unless it is boiled and consumed immediately after the sun goes down.

On top of that, it doesn't have any effect unless you drink it while the water is still quite hot. It's like something you'd force someone to down in a punishment game.

Even so, without this, I would need a magical tool that is not only rare but also expensive to produce a barrier to ward off monsters, rely on a skilled intermediate-level mage or form a party with multiple people and rely entirely on the method of taking turns to keep watch in order to get enough sleep.

Minnalis was an unexpected find, but this is one of the reasons that I wanted to find a slave when I first found myself in the royal capital.

Simply enduring the bitter taste and intense heat of this drink allows people to travel in pairs and get enough sleep by taking turns to keep watch, so the demand for this medicinal herb is high.

I keep watch from when the sun sets until about halfway through the night, and then Minnalis takes over until a little after sunrise. The hourglass that I use to keep track of when we switch over still has a large amount of sand remaining in it. Judging from the amount of sand, I still have plenty of time.

"Fuuh, so bitter, ueeeagh..." (Kaito)

The fire is crackling loudly nearby. I can't help but to let out a complaint to myself, though I keep my voice quiet so as to not wake Minnalis up.

I throw one of the dead branches we collected into the fire to keep it going, then set down the wooden cup that contains the bitter drink and gaze into the wavering fire. This is a convenient situation to think about various things.

The first thing that comes to mind is what happened at the outer wall of the royal capital.

I won't go out of my way to kill people whose deaths have no effect on my vengeance.

If I don't draw that line, the outline of my revenge will become too blurry. I won't be able to continue believing in my own vengeance.

The line between killing for vengeance and killing to vent my anger.

One day, that line would have slowly created uncertainty within me that would accumulate like a poison. If I kept ignoring that uncertainty, I would become nothing more than a true monster who doesn't care about who he kills.

Vengeance is an emotion.

I have to take vengeance in a way that doesn't allow the fire within me to break me any further.

If I lose my ability to reason and become a monster that moves entirely on instinct, I'm sure the fire within me would continue blazing even after I slay all of my enemies.

I would never be able to return to being a human. In the end, I would be broken. There would be no difference between that and being dead.

That's why I have no intention of distorting this line and am content with that. I have no intention of ceasing to be me.

The ones that will get involved in my vengeance are the ones who should be.

With that said, though I don't intend to go with any plans that kills everyone indiscriminately, not dragging any innocent people into it would be impossible.

At the very least, if there are people who aren't related to my revenge but killing them would contribute to it, I have no intention of hesitating to do that. I'm sure there will be some innocent people who will get involved.

Even if there aren't people like that, I will kill people whose faces I don't even know if I need to do it to survive.

I already possess a mind that won't hesitate to do that. If I didn't, I would have died at some point during my journey long before I was betrayed.

In short, I have to find a balance. If I drag too many people into my revenge and I can't process that in my own mind, I'll become a monster. But if I hesitate to get innocent people involved too much, my revenge will never be achieved.

And I've decided that I won't make any mistakes this time.

“The one I want to take vengeance upon isn’t this world. There’s no point in inflicting suffering on people I don’t even care about.” (Kaito)

By saying it out loud, I carve that thought into my mind so that I don’t forget it.

That’s right, the one I want to take vengeance upon isn’t this world.

It’s those who betrayed me, the ones I once thought of as companions. I can’t mistake who I need to take vengeance upon like I mistook who I needed to save in my first journey through this world.

“Ah, if only I really resented the entire world, how easy my vengeance would be then...” (Kaito)

I imagine a much easier road of revenge as I let out these words of self-derision. If every single person was an enemy, I could simply go on a rampage until this world is destroyed. I could have just become a monster who kills everyone without having to worry about choosing who needs to be killed.

If I had never met Leticia and my first journey through this world came to an end through betrayal while I was single-mindedly fixated on returning to my own world, I’m sure that’s how things would have turned out.

When I first came to this world, I could only think of this world as something artificial.

The people appearing on a painted background, asking me to defeat the Demon Lord. Stats and levels, magic and skills, strange-looking monsters, experience points that could be gained from defeating them and the superhuman powers that I gained as I did so.

Even if I was wounded, I could use powerful healing magic and expensive potions to quickly remove the pain and even heal my injured body parts.

It was like I had been trapped in the world inside a video game. A game that I could clear if I just defeated the Demon Lord.

There was no way that I could feel the sense that this was reality. If I had gone through this world only for that world to betray me, the people living in it would have simply appeared as nothing more than tools to me.

It's easy to imagine such a completely hopeless, broken version of me.

A version of me that is simply a monster that goes around killing everyone in the world without enjoying it or being happy about it, continuing until I die.

I'm sure that would be a very easy road to walk.

However, I wouldn't even be able to obtain the dark joy of revenge; I wouldn't feel any satisfaction. It wouldn't dispel any of my emotions; it would simply be a suicidal act of self-destruction.

"Oops, this is bad, this is bad." (Kaito)

With a particularly loud crackle, the fire crumbles.

It seems that I became too absorbed in my thoughts; the fire has grown considerably weaker. I hastily find some branches among the wood we gathered that looks easiest to burn and throw it into the fire.

"...So bitter, so hot." (Kaito)

The Fuzzy-grass tea still fills the wooden cup to the brim.

I take out some of the dried vegetables that were being sold as preserved food at a store in the royal capital so I can get rid of the bitter taste that has stained the inside of my mouth.

I find a branch of suitable length, pour magical energy into the [Water Fairy's Droplet Blade] to produce a chisel-sized blade, cut off the unnecessary parts and carve the tip of the branch into a sharp point.

I pierce the dried vegetables on the end and scorch it lightly on the fire in front of me, apply some seasoning that I bought in the royal capital and begin chewing on them.

Morning is still far away and the night is still long.

Chapter 2

The Hero Mistakes Right For Left

“Now then.” (Kaito)

I’ve had various things on my mind, but no matter how much I think about them, it doesn’t seem like I’ll come up with any answers.

As if to change my pace of thinking, I focus on how I’m going to distribute my experience from now on.

Even after we left the royal capital, I’ve been turning the monsters appearing on the highway into experience and distributing the gathered experience.

For now, I’ve paid back my experience debt, just enough so that I won’t level up. With that, I’ll be able to increase my level immediately whenever I need to.

I have to think carefully about the timing of when I’m going to level up, because unlocking Soul Swords alone is causing my stats to increase.

There’s a Soul Sword that temporarily decreases my stats and increases the experience I gain, but that reduces the attack power of all my other Soul Swords to zero when equipped.

Therefore, I would have to defeat monsters using only my own strength and if I used it now, I’d simply become unable to defeat anything due to a lack of offensive abilities.

And now I have about 25,000 experience points left.

“Hmm, what to do...” (Kaito)

The monsters around here are quite strong so the experience I’m earning from them isn’t bad, but unfortunately we don’t encounter them very often.

We’re planning to stay in Ermia for a while, so spare experience will be hard to come across.

Considering that, I'm finding it difficult to come to a decision even after narrowing down the possible candidates for where I should spend my experience, and Minnalis even asked me in a cold voice, [Are you incompetent, Goshujin-sama?]

I almost cried. I'm not being stingy.

"Actually, Minnalis has been pretty strict lately, hasn't she?" (Kaito)

She's acting humble as usual despite the positions of slave and master having been abolished, but she's overwhelming. Actually, from time to time, I feel an aura coming from her that tells me that I absolutely can't disobey her.

I have no intention of making her obey my every command, but I don't know how I feel about this.

With a small sigh, I light the campfire.

During my first time through this world, my eyes hadn't been open to the things around me until the last part of my journey to defeat the Demon Lord.

I didn't care about what I ate as long as it was edible, and I didn't have the time to be looking around at the scenery.

Whenever I tried to buy mysterious toys being sold in shops whose functions I didn't really know or get tempted to buy some clearly overpriced food being sold at a stall, Minnalis would get angry and give me a cold smile, as if to say, [Are you an idiot, Goshujin-sama?] Maybe because of the values she had from having lived in a poor village, even though we have money, she won't allow any wasteful use of it.

The only times she shows a nice smile lately was is we're coming up with ideas for our revenge, testing out torture methods that we could carry out on Goblins and other monsters that we come across or on days where she is simply in a good mood or when her head is spinning from mana intoxication.

Leaving that aside, it seems that if I don't come to a decision soon, this will drag on for too long.

So after all this time deliberating, among the three Soul Swords that I've been considering, I unlock the [Adversary's Kidnapping Blade.]

It's likely that my stats will be lower than those of my enemies for a while, so there will be a lot of opportunities to use it.

I can simply use other Soul Swords against opponents that have lower stats than me, so the fact that there are no disadvantageous side-effects is a huge thing.

I spent 15,000 experience, so I have 10,000 left.

I consider unlocking a fast sword that enhances my MP, but I decide against it.

I could use the 10,000 experience I have now to increase my level into the lower twenties.

It's best to keep some in case something happens so that I have it available to use freely if I'm forced to.

"I guess this is fine." (Kaito)

I look down at my hand to see that the sand in the hourglass has fallen.

It seems that more time has passed than I'd thought.

"Goshujin-sama, it is time to change places." (Minnalis)

I go to wake Minnalis to tell her that it's time to switch, but she's already awake.

"Oh, you were awake?" (Kaito)

"Yes... Goshujin-sama, you seem to talk to yourself a lot." (Minnalis)

"Wha -?!" (Kaito)

No, well, I can't help it, right? If you're on a long journey and you're alone, you talk to yourself a lot.

It's just like talking to yourself when you're living alone.

"It is fine during the day, but if you do not take care at night, it bothers me and I cannot sleep." (Minnalis)

Is she using some kind of skill to make this blank poker face? Is this her way of showing that she's irritated?

"I-I'm very sorry..." (Kaito)

"No, it is not a problem if you will take care from now on." (Minnalis)

Being subject to this cold treatment, I dejectedly pull the blanket over my head and close my eyes.

I kind of get the feeling that our relationship is starting to reverse.

She obeys the general rules that I set and big decisions that I make as long as nothing unexpected happens, but the everyday things apart from those... No, it's not that she's disrespecting me or anything like that. It's not like that; in fact, I know that the things she says in a cold tone are things she says out of concern and she's just being overly cautious, but still...

As such thoughts run through my mind, my consciousness slowly submerges into the depths of sleep.



"It seems that Goshujin-sama is asleep now." (Minnalis)

Confirming that Goshujin-sama is asleep, I run my fingers through his hair gently as usual while I undo my Audacity skill.

"Aaaah, jeez, why does Goshujin-sama's voice sound so comforting to my ears? Perhaps he has Siren blood in his veins." (Minnalis)

I whisper to myself quietly so that I definitely won't wake Goshujin-sama up.

I know that my face has become relaxed after undoing my skill.

"I shall do my best to acquire a magic tool that can record his voice." (Minnalis)

It's alright; this is not a wasteful use of money. This will be a very valuable purchase.

...Though this is not related in the slightest, next time Goshujin-sama shows interest

in some piece of junk that seems useless, I shall stay quiet and let him do as he wishes.

I decide to placate Goshujin-sama for when the chance to acquire a voice-recording magic tool comes.

But I must show my disapproval for food being sold at stalls. It is my job to make food for Goshujin-sama; I will not relinquish that role to anyone else.

As well as being able to make food for cheaper than buying it, I can thoroughly check the quality of the ingredients, but to think that he would make such a careless remark as, [I can just buy food from a stall, so it's fine]...

No, this just means that my skill in cooking is still lacking. I have no choice but to continue improving my skill and work hard so that I can conquer his stomach as I once heard about, so that he is infatuated with my cooking only.

“...But the disposable containers that Goshujin-sama uses are precious, and it is necessary to visit other places in order to increase my repertoire of dishes, even if I do not like it... I could accept normal bars and restaurants, but I am anxious about the ingredients and methods used to make food that is sold at stalls...” (Minnalis)

Whispering to myself in a voice so small that Goshujin-sama wouldn't be able to hear it even if he woke up right now, I feel happy to realize that, like Goshujin-sama, I am talking to myself a lot.

But when Goshujin-sama continues talking to himself at night, I often can't sleep properly because I become curious about it.

I scolded Goshujin-sama for talking to himself for such a selfish reason, so I must take care with my own words to myself.

With such pointless thoughts running circles around my head, I add wood to the fire and break pieces of wood that are already burning to take maintain the fire as dawn slowly approaches.

“Goshujin-sama, wake up, please.” (Minnalis)

“Mmh... Are we being attacked?” (Kaito)

It's a little before dawn. The sky has just started to grow lighter and the sun's outline isn't even visible on the horizon yet.

I'm woken up, stimulated by the fighting spirit that Minnalis seems to be full of.

“I do not believe so. But I can hear the sounds of battle a short distance ahead. They might continue in this direction as they fight; we should at least observe what is happening.” (Minnalis)

I'm sure she's used her [Hearing Enhancement] skill to direct her mana into her ears. Minnalis's rabbit ears are twitching.

As a human, I don't have the [Hearing Enhancement] skill to apply to my ears so I find it difficult to distinguish among the sounds of insects chirping and leaves rustling, but I can still faintly hear the sound of metal clashing against metal.

“It's coming from ahead... We'd normally ignore it otherwise.” (Kaito)

I let out a sigh.

I'd like to avoid being touched by some unknown god and receive a curse in this random place, but unfortunately, it's coming from a direction that doesn't allow me to ignore this.

I can't tell how far away it is with these ears, but the sounds are coming from the direction of Ermia, the college town.

Whether we choose to ignore it or get involved in some way, if we don't at least see what's going on and gain some information, we might be put on the back foot.

I learned the hard way during my first time through this world that ignorance can become a fatal weakness.

“Let's go.” (Kaito)

“Yes.” (Minnalis)

We toss the belongings that we took out for camping here into our bags and I prepare myself to produce any of my Soul Swords to match whatever situation we run into as we begin making our way cautiously towards the direction of the sound.

As the sound grows louder and louder, Minnalis draws her own sword and recasts her illusionary spell on herself.

Incidentally, the weapon in her hands is the eighth of the items we purchased in the royal capital. The seventh, which was showing signs of wear, perished near some monsters that it had killed.

“...Adventurers, and are those bandits?” (Kaito)

It seems that it’s a battle between humans.

Some rather unattractive men have surrounded a carriage. And there are some people fighting against them who look like adventurers.

Adventurers who have been hired as escorts fighting against bandits. It’s not a particularly surprising scene.

“Hmm, at this rate, the adventurers are going to be crushed.” (Kaito)

The adventurers seemed quite skilled; they were holding out against the bandits who outnumbered them almost two to one, but they’re going to reach their limits soon.

“It’s decided, then.” (Kaito)

“Yes, it is.” (Minnalis)

Minnalis and I give each other light nods and then step into the forest to our right while we still haven’t been noticed.

We could simply ignore the entire thing and pass them by along the side, but there’s a chance that this decision will become a burden to us in the distant future. But supporting either side is even more out of the question.

I don’t care whether the bandits or adventurers win. Honestly, in either case, there’s

no benefit to becoming involved.

There will be no problem if we go around through the forest. As I feel irritated that my sleep was cut short, we continue through the gaps in between the trees.

And it is at this moment that I wish that we went left instead of right.

“BRRRRUOOOOOOOH!”

“W-what terrible luck...” (Kaito)

“Well, if we were lucky, we would not be living lives like this.” (Minnalis)

An enormous monster with the face and body of a pig has appeared.

Unlike small Goblins, monsters such as these that are known as Orcs are the same size as a human while possessing superior physical strength.

However, though this monster appears to be what is called an Orc, it is also definitely different. It is a mutant Orc whose overall size is almost twice that of a normal Orc, and it has a black-iron hide with exceptional physical damage resistance.

...Standing before us is a [Black Orc], also known as a Big Orc.

Chapter 3

Minnalis Noticed The Gold Coins On The Black Orc

“Buro~ooo~tsu!!”

Black Orc Monster Male

Level: 54

HP: 534/2172 (1974)

MP: 121/221

Strength: 801

Stamina: 424

Endurance: 1712 (1465)

Agility: 314

Magic Power: 41

Magic Resistance: 33

Inherent Abilities:

[Black Skin]

Skills:

[Enhance Vitality Lv2]

[Cure Lv 2]

[Intimidate Lv 2]

[Abnormal Status Resistance Lv 4]

[Starvation Remedy Lv 3]

[Decayed Food Lv 3]

Condition: Bleeding

ステータス

ブラックオーク

Lv54

男 魔物

HP : 534/2172(1974) MP : 121/221

筋力 : 801 体力 : 424

耐久 : 1712(1465) 敏捷 : 314

魔力 : 41 魔耐 : 33

固有技能 : 『黒皮膚』

ス キ ル : 『生命力強化 Lv2』 『硬化術 Lv2』

『威圧 Lv2』 『状態異常抵抗 Lv4』

『食事療法 Lv3』 『悪食 Lv3』

状 態 : 出血

“As I thought, as you can see from its build, it’s a Black Orc.”

“This is not the time to be joking, Respected Master.”

There is not even a 0.1 percent probability for us to get out of this safely,

If even the probability theory is considered, then there is no chance.

“Bururu~o~oooooooo~!!”

“Get down!!”

I shouted, and threw a right fist at the Black Orc. We escaped from the path created and moved to the sidepath.

A groan leaked out accompanied by a Gou and Baki Baki Sound, the swing caused an entire tree trunk to be crushed from impact.

“Che! The location is bad, lets return to the highway, zo.”

This is like the goblin with the cursed weapon, if you falter for a second, then it goes bad. The Minnalis of now can easily block these attack perfectly and can even withstand it for several blows, but the weapon cannot hold on that long.

Naturally, I would like to eat, but it’s still too dangerous.

The Agility of the Orc is quite low and so is its the brain power. Therefore, dodging is not a problem, the surrounding trees are in the way though.

It's also the same for the Black Orc, it's unable to attack us with the trees blocking the path, and even we can't ignore the trees and run around them. Then, returning to the highway will give us enough space to dodge freely.

“Let's head to the highway where the group is, they will serve as quite the Decoy, which would be quite helpful.”

“Buraraaaaaaa!!”

The Black Orc throws a left fist in a diagonal direction from the top down.

Minnalis avoided the fist and immediately countered by attacking the sides.

“At least act like a man~!!”

I take out a throwing knife from my Round Pouch and threw it toward the Black Orcs eyes. But, it only managed to scrape its cheeks since it turned its face to dodge.

“Buru!!”

“Can't do much more than that scratch, I guess.”

I had applied Minnalis's poison to the knife, but that has no effect.

Even then, I still threw more throwing knives at it, while also using my skill, [Sword of Binding]. The Black Orc cleanly evaded the throwing knives and quickly came over.

Me and Minnalis jump out and onto the highway.

“Buruuuruuu...”

As soon as we get out, the Black Orc follows us out of the forest.

“That, that is a Black Orc!!”

“Sh~it! Why are you coming this way!?!?”

Are they adventurers, or Mercenaries? I don't really care, but I agree with that expression.

On the other hand, the Black Orc seemed to be smiling joyfully, since the number of prey have increased.

I turn to face the Black Orc while I held the [Blade of Adversary] in both hands.

The [Blade of Adversaries] had a similar look to the Tonfa design from my previous world.

The ends of the Tonfa design had bulging sockets where sickle like blades protrude outwards from the weapon. The blade glows with a terrifying gleam and has an extremely sharp edge, the sharp edge looks like it is ready to reap a soul. The blade has a size of about 1/3rd the body while the other 1/3rd lies at the handle.

The parts of the blade are blue and black scattered around, while the blade is vivid red. The blade seemed to be asking for prey.

“Gooyoo!!

A man who faltered in front of the Black Orc was knocked out instantly from its attack.

It seemed that all of the person’s bones were instantly crushed and he fell down motionless. From the looks of his face, he seemed to be an adventurer.

I had to reluctantly give up on the Black Orc drops and run away from there.

I could hear the cry of the Black Orc from the woods, and headed toward the settlements.

“Buhyaaahyaahya!!”

The Black Orc gleefully picked up the dead body of the man and proceeded to pummel the next one, another one, and kept moving around pummeling all the while.

“Ru-Run... fuu, gyaha!!”

Just then, a Thief like man came from the back of the Black Orc, and while strengthening his arms and muscles using Magic Power, he threw a hit toward the right Shoulder of the Black Orc.

“Buru~aaaaa!! ”

“Gyaaa!!”

Of course, when he approached the Black Orc, it threw a right arm as a counter and he was sent flying.

Baki Baki all of the Thief’s bones were broken and he fell dead in a state of which even his mother wouldn't recognize him.

Giving my thanks and now going for my harvest, I grasp the right shank of the Black Orc which was wide open and enter into its blind spot while it was looking at the Thief like man.

“Buru~aaaa~!!”

“Damn, it doesn’t work! The skin is too hard to cut into, what is with this physique!?”

The strike that I had planned for to cut into him deeply, had only remained to be shallow.

Even so, it noticed that I was able to leave a scratch, so the Black Orc took its distance from me.

Black Orc, as the name suggests, is one of the top species of Orcs.

Still, According to the adventurer’s guild, its rank is D+ A minimum party of Five D-Rank D-Rank adventurers is required to subjugate it, while at least Two C-Rank adventurer’s are required if it was classified as a monster that had priority to be subjugated,

This means it had the capability of reaching B-rank which is quite high, and while it was developing at D-Rank, you can see the strength right here...

By the way, the strength of leader of the Knights Order is about at C-Rank while there are Five more of them at the same rank. The Knight Order that I had escaped from all had E+ Rank strength.

The Strength of the Orc is slightly larger than a normal Orc due to it's inherent skill of {Back skin}. An average weapon only causes a slight graze due to its high defense physique.

There is however, a very low magic resistance when using pure magic, if this is used, it falls easily, hence its rank is not very high.

“Damn, by any chance, did I choose the wrong sword?”

We currently have no means of using magical attacks.

Although Minnalis has the phantom poison, it's a magic which produces poison, and the poison on its own does not have any effect.

Also, this Black Orc has high status resistance.

So, there is currently no method to pound the poison into it, and using poison gas is dangerous, as we are out in the open.

From the state of the adventurers and the mercenaries there, I was able to understand that there were no proficient magic users at all in this entire group.

It is easy for me to evade since its agility is quite slow, but since I am unable to deal significant damage, there is a problem.

“Respected Master, what shall we do?”

“It looks quite weak, this is wasteful.”

I don't what happened to the Black Orc right now, but it's really weak.

That figure illuminated by sunlight looked big, but had cuts all over, oi oi. The blood was continuously coming out of its wounds.

“Damn, this is not my place to die! You people, get yourselves together!!”

The man who raised his voice seemed to be the leader of the group. After hearing his voice, the people started running toward the forest away from the direction of the Black Orc.

“Oi, Client, we are running away, yo!!”

“Wa-wait!! There is so many goods in this carriage... tsu!!”

“This is not the time to be thinking about that!! You'll die, you fool!!”

That voice seemed to be the voice of the leader of the adventurers. Adventurers provide protection to the merchants who are their client's through the highway.

“Ok, you people too, run away!! Those swords are fencing swords right~, unless you're able to use magic, then your not its opponent.”

Even though that was a pain to say, but still, he said it, and started to move towards the highway with highway with his comrades.

That was a job experienced pattern, you get that only after many battles and will be able to analyze the situation quickly which leads you to be able to make a quick choice. He seems to be a veteran adventurer with quite a lot of experience.

“However, this is a regrettable to miss experience. As I thought, if I was able to go all out, then this wouldn't have been a problem.”

By looking at the Orcs status board through appraisal, I can see that the HP value that was at 534 had been reduced to 498.

As I thought, it's slowly losing HP due to its bleeding status.

“I am thinking of leaving it as it is and running away...”

“Have you ever heard that the meat of the Black Orc is very highly sought after in Alchemy and its price easily reaches a gold coin?”

“Respected Master, let's quickly take down this Orc, the money can be used for many matters throughout our journey.”

“.....It's alright, we are not wasting money, and we have plenty left of it.”

“Then, let's bet, anything other than money is fine.”

“Well, ab-about that.”

I decided to keep quiet about since it seemed to be more of a miserly sense than of the economic sense.

“Bururu~oooooooo!!”

The Black Orc heard us talking, and was alarmed while it immediately came at us while throwing a fist.

“Minnalis, I ask for your help, the characteristics of the Black Orc is black skin, a gigantic body, and high abnormal status resistance.”

“Understood.”

Splitting in two, to the left and right, both of us proceeded to attack its blind spot.

Quickly getting into place below the torso, and attacking it continuously, each hit struck the same place as before.

“Burrarararaaruuuuu!! Buooo!!”

The Black Orc rolled backward trying to dodge the attacks, but Minnalis threw a knife at that moment striking its eye and changing its direction.

The Black Orc tried to deflect the throwing knife in the same way as it did before but,

“As I thought, it's an Orc after all.”

“Burururuuuuuuuuu!!”

The second knife thrown had a small attachment by Minnalis which sliced into its eyeball in the same location as the first knife.

The small attachment had poison tied to it which was made from Minnalis. Although it doesn't deal any damage, it stimulates the nose and eyes causing excessive mucosal secretion and tears which causes blurriness and air deprivation. Since it is not an abnormal status effect, then the Orcs {Abnormal Status Resistance lvl 4} doesn't activate.

The Black Orc attacked with its right hand while covering its left eye. The Orc swayed and its fist hit the wooden carriage which was instantly crushed, with debris scattering everywhere.

“Even if you try to dodge away~it's still useless~!!!”

The randomly swinging fist is a problem, but it can be

it can be easily avoided. The point would be that it's holding its left eye while it swings its right arm.

Although I was aiming to lock its movements down by attacking its feet, but it was very helpful to attack its upper body.

“Bururu!?”

I started to attack it using the tips of the {Blade of Adversary} which can easily puncture holes into its body, then I tried to scratch it and continued to puncture it left and right. Under the black skin, red blood slowly began to appear.

“Minnalis!!”

“Yes~!!”

Minnalis sticks a Butcher knife into its body.

“Burururuuuuuu!!”

The Black Orc raised a terrible cry and rips out the Butcher knife from its body and screams even louder.

“I was told that the Abnormal Status Resistance was quite high and used my strongest paralysis poison on that knife, but it didn't last a second. I'm losing confidence in my poison, tsu.”

“No, it's not like it's totally not working at all.”

The Black Orc has obviously pulled out the knife, but its movements are duller than before.

Seeing that, I casted appraisal, and I could see that there was a status effect paralysis (weak) added to it.

The HP left for the Orc is about 200.

“Alright, I guess that will do it...”

“The roar of the wind spirit echoes, {Green Thunder Flash}!!”

And then, all I could hear was *Baki Baki* and *Koki Koki* with a thud sound.

There was a flashing green storm that blew right through everything in its path.

Burururuuuuuuuu!!!”

“Na~tsu!?”

Of course, it definitely can't be unscathed by going through such an attack.

The Black Orc, which was devastated by being hit with a magical wind attribute

lightning based attack, was unable to withstand it and raised the last cry of the monster.

“This magic... belongs to that woman...”

“Respected Master, your wife has returned with much emotions, so please look toward here.

That voice, as I thought, my guess was right. Minnalis was already activating her skills with hostility.

“Ouuu!! Are you ok~~~, I came to help~!!”

I turn my head to the voice which was coming from the edge of the road.

Although she came at the perfect time, I was only surprised for a moment, and then immediately returned to my normal look.

“Ah! Could you forgotten my face after you came back to Elumia?”

I desperately held my face from showing my emotions.

Huu, finally, the first one.

I have come back for revenge on everyone who wronged me.

.....The sorceress, Yumis Erumja.

Ahhh, there are a lot of things that happened and that should be done.

There is one thing that I determined to make sure to be done though.

Yumis, I will knock you down so bad that you shall feel even hell would have been better, I will make sure that you shall never see the light!

Chapter 4

The Hero Experiences The Feeling Of Nausea From Flattery

“I'm really sorry, I heard the Black Orc's roar, so I rushed here from the highway as soon as I heard it's voice... , but to appear just before it met its end...”

She was talking in a gentle and slow tone while lowering her head to give an apology. She used a cane that was decorated with magical stones, and at first glance she looked like a mature woman donning the robe of a magician.

Sunny, yet dark green coloured hair was clasped together with a wooden flower clip put on the right side of the head, and let loose to the side, hanging freely. The woman's hair seemed to give off a gentle impression caused by the sun shining and reflecting off it.



Yumis Erumia.

As the name suggests, she is the daughter of the City Lord of Erumia; a Noble, and a Magic Researcher.

She is also quite capable, on the first run she was the person who worked as a magician to bring down the Demon King.

“Even if there were two of you, why were you using weapons instead of magic? Black Orc’s are quite the dangerous opponent... No, that isn’t an explanation. I haven’t even confirmed the situation, I’m truly sorry for my behaviour.”

“No, we~ll, there were many unavoidable circumstances during this situation.”

The truth is, she stole someone else’s prey. I endured the urge to scream what I was thinking while making a flattering smile that made me nauseous.

Not yet, it's still not time for revenge, the circumstances are different from the time with the princess. This isn’t the time to be impatient.

We~ll, I acted on premise since I knew the circumstances and structure of the place. Therefore, I could take revenge on the princess, the king, the queen, and the knights that were unable to stand up to me, so they could only endure.

I was thankful for the memories of my first run, it helped me to stomach the sour feeling welling up inside me and keep calm.

“By the way, how were you able to hold up until now without the use of magic? I’m sorry, but...”

Right now, Me and Minnalis look like beginner adventurers wearing leather armor and black robes that we bought in the kingdom.

We are in a two person team and we haven’t hired a carriage to look more like ordinary citizens, so you cannot differentiate us at a single glance. Moreover, we don’t look like influential people.

“A~h, that is...”

“That strangely shaped blade, does it perhaps have a secret to it? Ah, no, that’s rude of

me to ask the secrets of an adventurer.”

“No, this is just a very sharp blade with a special shape. When we encountered each other, he was already in a weakened state. It was difficult to wound him, so I tried my best to bring his strength down until he collapsed.”

“Is that so... I didn’t know who weakened the Black Orc, I was looking around while heading here and saw that he was already able to escape...”

Yumis inclined her head with a sad look while thinking, and shook it after.

“Either way, the person who weakened the monster cannot be confirmed. I would like to obtain the entirety of the Black Orc materials and its delivery. So, I would like to ask that of you, can you sell this Black Orc to me?”

“This Black Orc?”

“Yes, I would like it right here. How about 5 gold coins? I have a Grade 2 tool bag, I can undertake the delivery right here.”

The tool bag is a round magic bag of the magic tool category. The capacity of the bag is determined by its grade, and the bag with the highest ability is given the 1st grade, then it lower’s with each grade, and goes up to the 10th grade with the lowest grade.

The 2nd Grade tool bag has the abilities to reduce the weight to 1/20 of its original weight, and it has the capacity to store about a room with the length of 8-tatami mats.



The tool bag is similar to my [Round squirrel sword sack], but with limitations added to it, so there is no demerit in having one either.

Unlike my round sack though, it only has weight reduction and space expansion magic applied to it. When you put something inside, the weight raises little by little.

Even when retrieving, the mouth of the tool bag opens wide, therefore it's possible to store large objects inside it, but it doesn't absorb objects as soon as it's brought close to the bag. So, when more stuff is piled into it, it has become harder to retrieve specific objects.

In addition, if the miscellaneous items are mixed together, then taking out a specific object becomes even harder. The cost of the bag increases with each grade.

Many Veteran adventurers will have this tool bag, bag, but most intermediate adventurers who work hard can only buy up to a 5th Grade tool bag with a lifetime investment.

Even in the Kingdom, we only have the capability to buy two 5th grade tool bags, but the round sack is clearly superior despite having to sacrifice 5% of the upper amount of our MP.

If you place your hands into the mouth of the bag to retrieve a knife, such as a throwing knife in battles, you can take it out by only remembering to have to search the bag. No matter how much weight is inserted, the bag doesn't change, and there is no upper limit for capacity. Therefore, I didn't feel the need to obtain the tool bag that costs dozens of gold coins.

"A Grade 2 tool bag~, that's quite amazing. A~ah, don't worry too much about the price. Originally, we wouldn't have been able to sell it, since we don't have the capability to carry it. I also don't really know the price of the Black Orc, so selling it to a beauty is fine."

I said that to her while trying to look natural to show I wasn't flattering her, but I immediately regretted it.

As a flattery or as a joke, as soon as I praised her, it left a nauseating and a sour feeling in my mouth, as if a rotten fruit was stuffed into it. I even thought about hitting the Black Orcs face on impulse, but doing so would surely cause problems for my plans in the future, so I restrained myself.

"Kusukusu, I have used proper market prices, whether you check it later in the city or not, I don't mind."

If you had tried to cheat me by ignoring market value, I would have surely called you out on that, as usual, the surface of this human is still perfect.

“I am known as Yumis. If you ever come to the school of Erumia, make sure to drop by.”

“Please take care of me during that time.”

“Then, I shall take my leave. I came here to collect the star grass that lies further ahead of here. Gather and form, [Creation: Earth Puppet Golem]”

When Yumis activated her magic, the ground rose and out came sand and stone, which was gathering and rising to make form.

Finally, two red earth dolls were completed, and the two puppets lifted the Black Orc and started packing it. Black smoke was still being emitted while being stored due to the magical attack from Yumis previously.

“1, 2... 5, this is 5 gold coins. Here you go.”

Yumis casually counted 5 gold coins and handed them over.

Upon receiving it, I briefly bowed, and Yumis received the tool bag from the golems and proceeded to go away from town.

Of course, I also wanted to obtain some distance between us from the unexpected encounter, so I headed toward Elumia. When she completely disappeared, Minnalis stopped her Iron Mask skill.

<Tl: Iron Mask in this instance can also expressed as Expressionless, Hard, or cold as ice. Etc.>

“That’s surprising, I never expected that I would see that woman's face before I even reached the city.”

“A~ah, that's right. This has been quite the unexpected event.”

“But still, is it not fine for Master to acquire the Iron Mask skill? Although there were no requirements for it up until now, flattery with such a trash like woman and to a kind of person holding such a complexion... such a woman, saying she was beautiful.”

Minnalis was murmuring something with a small voice at the end, but I wasn’t able to hear it.

I wanted to ask her what she said, but the mood has worsened from the previous situation, so I considered against it.

“The Iron Mask skill is very irritating, if both of us seem expressionless whenever we meet a revenge subject, then that would alert them. Honestly, taking such a friendly attitude with her made me feel nauseous, but I was able to handle it.”

“If Master says so, we~ll... Then, should I also have a friendly smile on my face from now on? But still, no matter what happens, it would still give a bad aftertaste.”

“That is so, that feeling is the lowest. Let's do it together, whether we will be cheerful together, or feel worst together.”

“Doing it together you say... that is certainly quite attractive.”

“Wa, what is it? What is with this weird self indulgent fantasy?”

It was quite the unexpected image of the woman, but I don't think she seems like she would spend her free time doing unproductive work.

“Ha~a, We~ll, that's fine too.”

“? We~ll, for now, let's consider it to be the former. When we reach the next town, let's not pick an inexpensive lodging, but go for a slightly expensive one. It's not uncommon for travellers to choose expensive lodging when they just finished a long journey. Let's go somewhere and have a delicious meal rather than cooking it.”

“Nope, I shall make the meal. Please

the meal. Please change your preferences and allow me to make it...”

“Nn, but, I keep relying on you for making the meals, do you not feel the need to rest at all? We will be able to borrow the kitchen, it's alright not to cook as long as we are having a regular dinner while inside of the city.”

“Cooking is my hobby after all. Moreover, I don't like having food cooked by the likes of those humans. Or, is it that you dislike my cooking?”

“...sometimes, that's quite mean of you to say that, you.”

“Ara, did you never notice? A woman is a creature that's very good and has cunning plans.”

Acting at the time MP Intoxication increased her sex appeal, Minnalis laughed.

“...She obtained objectives using cunning means, and becomes a vile creature to obtain them if dominated.”

Minnalis said this while laughing, and the dark smile disappeared from her face while a dark flame lit up in her eyes.

Most likely, she remembered one of her Revenge candidates, the words said by Rosha.

A girl I saw in the memories of Minnalis signed the contract with her was certainly such a kind of person.

“We~ll, I don't have any problems since Minnalis's cooking is quite delicious.”

“Tss, if you say it so directly, I feel quite embarrassed.”

“Iya, aren't you trying to hide those expressions while using the Iron Mask skill?”

She was Embarrassed, saying so, Minnalis still kept on having her expressionless face.

“I think that trying the other Chefs dishes will be helpful as well though. Since Minnalis already knows the basics, eating out will be quite helpful.”

“That is quite right. Although, I dislike it. I don't want to increase the number of dishes in my repertoire. To the point of recreating it perfectly so that I can make it any number of times later.”

“Oi, oi, is that so. Iya, We~ll, that's fine, I guess?”

Somehow, the inner Chef inside of Minnalis seemed to have been provoked somehow.

Once I confirmed that the Iron Mask skill had been deactivated from her expressions, we proceeded to head toward Erumia.

I realized that I had calmed down a little bit later after that...

“By the way, we haven’t had breakfast yet.”

“That seems to be so, due to fighting with the Black Orc, I seemed to have forgotten about it, I shall prepare it right now.”

On that day, Minnalis used a little extra eggs in the kitchen to make breakfast that was quite extravagant.

Chapter 5

Green Nightmare

**Chronologically - This chapter occurs before the "Despairing dreams of the Hero"*

"Haa, haa, haa"

I was running through the Dark Forest, where the tree trunks grow very thick. My HP remained adequate. The MP, on the other hand, was previously used to set up traps.

"Tsu!!"

Suddenly my Life Perception Boundary, which I had thinly spread around using my magic, alerted me. I immediately jumped to the side and a green beam landed where I had previously stood. It had been cast without a chant, thankfully I was able to dodge by rolling to the side.

A sound, as if something huge and heavy had been dropped from a high place, resounded; followed by a loud roar, rattling the surroundings again. A pitifully huge tree was blown away completely after a direct hit. It looked as if lightning had struck down, causing charred wood to fly everywhere.

Judging by the damage, it should have been Green Thunder-Lightning Flash, with quite a bit of power behind it. The power of the magic had been adjusted to a non-lethal level, aimed not to kill but paralyze me, factoring in my low magic resistance as well. As usual, the only one who can cast and control with such finesse was THAT genius.

"Damn it!!"

In this situation in which I was running low on MP, I was unable use my absolute Magical resistant Barrier [Sword Of Protection] due to the Time restrictions.

Although it was best to escape using the Sword of Teleportation, it used a similar amount of MP as the [Sword of Protection] and thus unusable, currently.

No... it's not like I could not utilize it, rather I was unable to activate it while running

and evading.

“There is no choice but to do it... su”

Kaito steeled his mind and quickly ran to a less congested area. At the clearing he stopped running from his pursuer and prepared his sword.

“Ara, have you finally decided to stop running?”

“Yumisu...”

My pursuer turned out to be one of my old companions. Wrapped in her usual [Dark Green Robe], which amplified Wind Magic, she smiled her unchanging smile.

The enemy magician - Yumisu Erumia.

“If you stop resisting, as I was your previous companion, I shall kill you painlessly. Unlike what the princess or that warrior would have done. I shall give you a second to think it over. Since it’s necessary to obtain the materials with the least amount of damage as possible. ”

There was no trace of friendliness or feelings of companionship in those words that she said with a smile. In her eyes, though, laid a glint of madness.

It seemed as though the Yumis who stood in front of me, had no traces of guilt in trying to kill me. Then again, that wasn’t something I wished to confirm by staying here.

As expected, confrontation was inevitable. My hope for reconciliation, which laid in in some corner of my mind, were shattered by her eyes. She looked at me as if I was a thing, not even human. Those eyes which once looked at me with respect for being the strongest were gone, replaced with eyes that looked at me as if I was nothing, nothing but Materials.

“Tsu, WHY~!! WHY DO YOU WISH TO KILL ME!!”

It was a simple Question.

...Even though she no longer looked at me as a person, I wanted to know the truth behind her emotionless words.

“Why? It won’t change, no matter how many times I say it! If I obtain your body, which has the strength to take down the Dungeon Guardian, the strength to take care of the Demon King while negating its power, I will be able to create a Tool! The Masterpiece of a lifetime. And then my name will be engraved onto the stone monument of Erumia, and I will gain recognition in Erumia, No!! I will gain recognition everywhere! And then my reputation will rise exponentially.”

She said happily, with an innocent smile on her face.

“If Fame is your purpose, then you have more than enough of it already!!”

“That’s no good. The only fame I obtained was from being your Magician Companion. My dream is to have my name carved on the stone monument of Erumia, but as of right now that isn’t possible. Only people who have created the greatest Magical Tool of their generation have the potential of getting their name engraved.”

She looked sorry while saying this, but in the next moment her eyes light up with hope.

“And so, please die for me quietly. To be honest, I’ve had enough of playing around and am reaching the limits of my patience.”

Her eyes shone vividly, because her dream was right in front of her eyes.

The only requirement for her dreams to come true was my death; such selfishness.

“You betrayed me... for such a pointless reason ”

“Although it might be pointless dream for you, for me it’s my most important dream desu~. The existence of an Demon King was already extremely disgusting for us, but if it wasn’t for you...”

While saying so, her tone slowly sinks to that of a retorting child; thinking that her actions were, without a doubt, righteous.

She continued to spit out those disgusting words.

“Isn’t it fine? The Kingdom is already your enemy and also there is almost no possibility for you to return to your previous world, since you cannot use magic, anyway.”

“SHUT UP! Even so, I will find a way to return to my World!!”

“You’re quite stubborn ne~ But there is no way. Since your precious dream has already been [Destroyed], help me fulfill my dream by becoming my ingredient. ”

“Che~, YUMISUUUUUU!!”

I couldn’t take it anymore. There was still a part, hidden deep in my heart, that still believed that she was my comrade. Those words though, completely shattered that part.

The person in front of me no longer had any room for negotiation. She was an enemy, whose existence itself could not be tolerated, anymore.

“Ardent Wind • Ten Flash!!”

An emerald, with tinges of red, katana emerged, the [Wave Sickle Katana]. He formed a cross and slash outwards.

Invisible wind blades were created from the crosses that attacked Yumisu. The blades were quite hard to defend against.

“[Water, Wind, Flame, explosion]”

Yumisu used Magic by only calling out their Magic Name, without chanting. The Magic exploded outwards to prevent the Wind Blades from reaching her.

The explosion was caused by the decomposition of water, obtained by using Water Magic, to hydrogen particles, using Fire Magic. The particles were then ignited by lightning from the rapid movement of Wind Magic.

I was the one who thought the principle. It was magic developed by the efforts of us two.

The explosion resulted in dust flying everywhere, limiting eyesight.

I had definitely expected her to use this magic, keeping her magical consumption to a minimum.

“Envelop Eternal Darkness -[Phantom Mirage]”

Passing magic into the sword I had prepared previously the [Cicada wing Blade], I chanted the Magic Chant

Mirages of myself appeared around me. All of us spread out and flew out the dust cloud at the same time.

It was hard task to differentiate between 5 Magical Energies, even for Yumisu.

“Tsk, [Stinger Mountain]!!”

Of the 5 mirage’s that were created, 3 of them, including the main body, rushed towards Yumisu’s location.

Yumisu countered with dozens of conical stone spikes, which appeared out of the ground.

Fortunately or Unfortunately, the distance between us was short., One of the mirages tried to cut the spikes, but was penetrated and disappeared. Another mirage was hit on the elbow by the stone spike tip and also disappeared

“The fact that the other two bodies have disappeared, means that you are the original. They were mirages formed from your sword. As I thought, you have almost exhausted your MP”

Another chantless GreenLighting stuck, leaving behind a green flash.

Of course Kaito avoided it, but Yumis’s goal was not the mirage but the tree behind it.

The mirages could not avoid the countless flying charred wood pieces and the mirage that had avoided the lightning soon disappeared, leaving behind smoke.

“[Earth,Fire,Cage]”

“DAM-che!!”

A small cage of earth with hemispherical grid lines of magma enveloped me.

“Saa~, This ends our game of hide and seek”

“.....Ah, yes. This is the end.”

“If you stay in there for too long, then you will get baked which will cause the ingredient quality to fall; so won’t you please accept the truth? Become an ingredient and pass on already! It would be so much less painful than being burned alive.”

Saying so, Yumisu laughed heartily. There was no choice but to accept that this was, Yumisu’s true face.

She had not changed after I took care of the Demon King, Letisha. This was her true nature from the beginning.

I had met her on the streets of Eurmia and travelled together with her for more than two years. Why was I unable to see her true character sooner?

Not just her, but the princess and others as well. Why was I unable to notice.

Since the day I defeated Letisha, I’ve kept wondering, over and over again - Why am I so dumb? What was I seeing? Why couldn’t have I noticed this sooner?

I still don’t understand. No matter how many times I’ve repeated the questions in my mind...

“Do you have any final words? I will listen to them”

Maybe it was because she thought I had given up that Yumisu said these words with an amiable attitude.

“Yes, but I do not have anything I wish to tell you. Even if there was something I wished to tell you, we wouldn’t have enough time... There seems to be an increase in the number of things I should apologize for though...”

“What are... he!? Wha!? That light!? [Green Thunder-----.....”

“See ya, you psychopathic lady”

Then I was wrapped up in the light of transition... and disappeared from the Yumisu’s eyes.



When the teleportation was complete, Kaito had crossed a large mountain range and then some from the location he previously fought with Yumisu.

It's drizzling, A drenched body will lose temperature more quickly.

Kaito's body had already exceeded the limit. Kaito entered a cave which was nearby by chance, and confirmed that there were no signs of monsters and then he laid down and started to clear his mind of the hallucination from the teleportation.

"Puha~, deep..."

Recovering from the hallucination kaito looked down at his terrible state.

There were multiple deep wounds all over his body, vast amount of blood continued to ooze through his equipment. There were places on his body where the skin was lacerated, some flesh wounds were opened up again and and in some parts flesh was torn out while blood continued to splurt out.

"It's a good thing I didn't call that person an Idiot. Otherwise I would be called a much bigger idiot right now~."

Involuntarily, he started to laugh self-deprecatingly.

Kaito thought that it was impossible to utilize Magic beyond the existing MP, but that is not true. Even if the MP is unavailable, one can still activate Magic as long as one can endure the acute pain that attacks the body.

Of course, there is a catch.

If the Magic is activated when MP is depleted, the HP will be consumed in response while corresponding amount of pain is inflicted.

Despite possessing a vast amount of magic naturally from a young age, along with the technology/technique that suppresses her power,, without MP to support it, failure's often happen when you overdo it, if Letishia had not told me this while laughing while we was talking about the olden days, then it would have been difficult to escape like this.

“A-h, I did not expect that I would make a debt after she died. ”

Taking out an HP potion and an MP Potion from the round sack, I sprinkled the HP potion all over my body and gulped down the entire MP potion in one gulp.

With the little bit of MP recovered I took out the fuel rock from the round sack and set it ablaze with the spirit sword and placed it on the ground. Smoke started to reveal itself, while lighting the fuel rocks which burned much longer than regular firewood, My tired thoughts started to leak out.

“I told you that I was a scatterbrain, how many do I have to apologize before you forgive me ”

The pouting and angry face of Letishia came to mind, and spontaneously a small smile floated.

“Ahh,I want to see you... It is really lonely without you Letishia”

A dream that I seriously wished for it to be true even if it's only for a while.

Taking Letishia, returning to my original world and living a peaceful life.

My family would definitely be surprised. I don't know what exactly has been happening over at the other side, but if I were to take Letishia with me, Mother and Father would definitely be surprised.

I wonder what kind of face will my little sister make when she learns that I was able to get a Girlfriend. My siblings and siblings and I shared a favorable relationship, but I disappeared suddenly, and when I return along with her, they would probably lost for words for a quite a while.

Seeing the insanely beautiful letisha, there is no doubt that both Suehiko and Kenta would be vexed while crying tears of blood. Even that Stupid Couple Yuma and his girlfriend who are always lovey-dovey would lose an eyeball, the two of them will probably give a word of congratulations.

There might be quite a lot of problems, even so if Letisha is by my side, along with her smile on her face that I loved so much.



I thought many times that if it is just a dream...

I thought many times that if this dream is reality.

Just like what yumisu said, a dream that was short-lived and would never come true.

While I entrust myself to that fleeting dream, the surroundings got covered by gloomy rain clouds and gradually darken.

And then, when my sight was dyed with darkness, that's when I realized that I was dreaming about the memories of the old days, and I realized the fact that I would wake-up soon.



Academic City Erumia.

True to its name, it is a City which specializes in Academics that the Ororurea Kingdom highly regards.

Each Kingdom has a city which specializes in Special Research and doubles as an Education Institution, and among them the Erumia Research Institute are famous for their developments of Magic tools, and the Marquis which governs Erumia along with the surrounding areas who are famous for being formidable Magic Masters paired with their talent.

Originally it was a city where the trade between kingdoms intersected, from unusual rare and valuable goods, new kinds of knowledge was gathered...

In Addition, it was a given that due to condition of the surrounding environment there was quite a wide variety of Monsters with materials that acted as essential catalysts for the production of Magic tools, which further bolstered the popularity on the creation of Magic tools.

Due to the fact that the city was developed on the trade of Magic tools which was quite a unique industry, the demand for adventurers who gathered the materials for the Magic tool production also increased, and seeking the methods on the production of these Magic tools and their knowledge more people started to gather in this city.

And now it has become one of the most distinguished cities in the kingdom.

Later on a position as a Researcher and an Education Institution which mainly focused on Magic tools was formally recognized by the King of that time, and the nobles who ruled the territory at that time, according to the Ancient Ororurea dialect were named Erumia [Seekers of Knowledge], and the city was allowed to be named after them.

Nowadays, it is a city which is at the forefront of the industry in both as a relay point for Trade and as an Institution which specializes Magical tool research, and for this reason Merchants, scholars and Adventurers gather there, it is the city which has the largest variety of people on a large scale in the entire kingdom.

And that, it was at this city which we were finally able to reach.

“Goshujin-sam, it’s morning already, Please wake up”

“...please, give me, 5-more minutes”

It was the worst dream. This probably happened because of seeing her face again yesterday, there is no other explanation for it.

Inside my dull slumber, while my consciousness was half awake, I heard someone’s voice and the feeling of someone shaking my shoulders.

And so, knowing that the voice belonged to Minnalis, I replied with such words in my half conscious state.

With a firm resolve of not letting that dream remain as only a dream. But it was still a dream that I did not wish to acknowledge while laying on a proper bed after such a long time.

From the start of of my second time, this was the first time I acknowledged the importance of a proper bedding.

An excellent heat insulated monster feathers stuffed into a pillow cover made from cotton obtained from a fantasy world plants, and a silk sheet obtained from woven threads obtained from silkworms, and fairly bouncy mattress obtained from fantasy world plant called Spring trees.

I wondered just how long I could sleep in such a happy and comfortable environment.

For almost over a year, I hardly stayed at inns because at inns because I was cautious of raids. All I had was a thin blanket that was easy to obtain and a Dirty hard tree as a pillow and the cold hard ground as a bed.

It's not possible to sleep without putting up the barrier, and it's not possible to get a deep sleep everyday because I was cautious of the surroundings.

Of course I hadn't dropped my guard while I was asleep, but even so with just this much, I was still able to get a pleasant time of sleep due to the varying degree of softness along with the low degree of risk.

It was just 1 - large silver coin for a double bed room for 10 days. Exactly because it's a pleasant sleeping environment after a long time, I did not wish to think about that nauseating dream and think about it early on the day.

"That's why, Please, just for a little while more..."

Muttering so I sunk deeper into the bed while placing the Feathery pillow on my head.

"Hora, quickly get up, didn't you wish to go to the Adventurer guild today?,"

Saying so Minnalis striped the sheets from over me just like a demon.

"Ughhhh... , Return it..."

"Not happening, this is already... mine, anyway please get up already"

Minnalis first stripped me of the Sheets from the bed and then took pillow.

"AAAAAAaaaaa,Gaa~, it hurts..."

And then my beloved pillow and sheets were stolen from me.

Even so while kaito was lying face-down on the bed,

The Bunny eared female Beastwoman used her extraordinary physical ability and grabbed the edge of the Bed and without regret pulled it from under him, causing kaito to roll down from the side of the bed.

Kaito could not continue playing in his drowsy state, and reluctantly raised his body

from the ground.

“Don’t you think that was a bit too rough, Minnalis-san?”

“Even though I allowed you to wake up properly the first time, it was Goshujin-sama’s fault for not getting up properly the first time. ”

...Was there a first time? Ahh~, come to think of it, I do feel like I remember saying 5-more minutes.

“Moreover it was Goshujinsama who told me, that I should do so if you refused to wake up”

“Did I really say that? No, I probably did.”

I remember saying that you should do so very clearly in my head.

Even though I also overslept when I was at the imperial capital, because I didn't woke up with the same appearance this time, I asked for it last night so I don't experience the same habit as that time.

There is also that, the room we use is not 2 single rooms, but we rented a double room instead.

...By no means, it’s because Minnalis said it’s wasteful of money.

“Did you wish to lock me out to such an extent?”

“Ahh, Goshujinsama is a man, there are times when you wishes to be alone too right.”

“It’s fine, am I not a very understanding woman? ”

Those eye’s had suddenly turned very cold and continued to stare holes into me without mercy, and criticized me without any doubt in them, and in the end I gave up.

It was absolutely not a bull’s eye, No really it wasn’t.

...I was upset and reluctantly choose a Double room, but thinking about it now I should have held my ground.

“I have prepared breakfast by borrowing the kitchen after I had tried to wake you up during the first time, so let’s go down.”

“Ok, let’s have breakfast for now”

I held the bed while heaving a huge yawn when suddenly a scary feeling came creeping from my back and I immediately gave up on my idea, and then crushed the last remaining traces of sleepiness along with the bad dream that I had dreamt.

TL: notes:

Kenta and Suehiko - Kaito’s siblings in his original world.

Letishia - Maou of Kaito’s current world

Minnalis - Bunny Eared beastmen companion/ Probable waifu? / yandere?

Ororurea Kingdom - The kingdom where Kaito and Minnalis are currently in

Academic City Erumia - The city where Kaito and Minnalis are currently in

Yumis Erumia - Current Revenge candidate

Chapter 6

The Hero Is Greatly On-Guard Against Clichés

After eating breakfast, we began moving early, just as travelers leaving a city should.

Our destination is the Adventurers' Guild, and naturally, our objective is to register as adventurers and acquire adventurers' identification papers.

The Adventurers' Guild is an agency that acts as the intermediary between clients and adventurers.

It's an organization that exists in the Kingdom, the Beast Nation, the Empire, the Lawful Nation, every country without belonging to any of them, with freedom, power and adventure as its symbols.

An organization that at least guarantees the social status of an adventurer of its members and ensures that there is no trouble between clients and adventurers.

Well, to put it simply, it's a 'temporary employment office' that spans every nation.

Though 'adventurer' is pleasant to hear, not all of the work is as full of adventurous spirit as that word might make one imagine.

Gathering medicinal plants, cleaning up the city, collecting rent, investigating extramarital affairs.

Jobs of delivering letters like a courier and requests to act as escorts.

In short, it's correct to think of them as freeters who do whatever is requested.

They accept some of the numerous one-off work requests, not tied down to their clients for any longer than their contracts specify.

Of course, it's not like they're constantly employed, so work doesn't come around periodically. It's an occupation with an unstable income and lifestyle.

With that said, they only do these odd jobs at the start. Regardless of everything else, the main work of an adventurer is to defeat monsters and obtain their materials.

If they gather experience in combat through fighting weaker monsters like Goblins and Garmes, soon enough, they become able to accept the monster extermination requests that earn more money.

Of course, they can't accept dangerous monster extermination requests from the beginning. Adventurers are separated into ranks based on their achievements, and can only accept requests suitable for their ability.

Excluding apprentices too young to become adventurers who are sometimes called G-rank adventurers, the lowest real adventurers are F-rank adventurers who can accept requests to exterminate monsters like Goblins and Garmes. From there, they make their achievements and become stronger, climbing the ranks one at a time until they are placed at the highest rank, the SS rank.

And in the same way, officially recognized monsters are classified from F-rank to SS-rank, sometimes with + or – signs attached to the rank, so that each rank of monster has three different extermination difficulties. The ranks of the extermination requests correspond with the monsters' ranks.

In other words, adventurers cannot accept dangerous, relatively well-paying work while their ranks are still low.

Those who become SS-rank adventurers are treated as legendary individuals. However, like legendary individuals, only a handful of people are able to succeed as adventurers to the point of exterminating powerful monsters like Dragons, successfully defeating Guardians deep within high-difficulty dungeons and becoming famous.

Among all of the occupations that currently exist in this world, the occupation of adventurer has an extremely high mortality rate.

Before reaching SS-status, most adventurers lose their lives or realize their own limits and decide to stay at a comfortable level. Even so, the reason that there is no shortage of people becoming adventurers is because there is no shortage of people who earnestly desire to become such heroes, and because there are many in situations where they are forced to become adventurers.

The requirements of becoming an adventurer is to be over fourteen years of age and to be able to pay the initial registration fee of a few large bronze coins, which is about the cost of a single meal.

Connections, large sums of money, a prominent family or a distinguished personal history aren't necessary.

Those who have so little money to begin with that they can't even pay the initial registration fee can postpone their payment.

In other words, even truly broken orphans without a single possession to their names can become adventurers.

That's exactly why the adventurer occupation acts as a receptacle for those who couldn't acquire, or refused, proper, safe jobs like being a knight, soldier, merchant or craftsman.

Bringing it back to the original topic, acquiring adventurers' identification papers is beneficial for us in a lot of ways.

First, as their name suggests, they identify us as adventurers.

The human-supremacist Kingdom, the Beast-person-supremacist Beast Nation, the power-supremacist Empire and the religious nation that is the Lawful Nation are the four powers that are conquering the continent. And there are a number of small countries of minority populations that exist like stitches in between these four major powers.

When moving between these nations, the Adventurers' Guild vouches for adventurers with respectable ranks, so it's easier to cross borders.

Also, in cities beyond a certain size, someone with no identification can't stay in one city for long. Identification papers are needed to stay for longer than ten days, so the identification papers that can be easily obtained at the Adventurers' Guild are convenient.

In addition, they provide exemption from the fee required to enter a city.

In a way, this is only natural. Adventurers often enter and exit cities to complete requests; it would cost too much if they had to pay money every time they do so.

And last of all, there is a great variety of people who become adventurers. For us, this is a big factor.

Fallen noblemen who were chased out of the cities they were living in.

People with guilty consciences who have washed their hands of working in the underworld.

On top of that, there are royal family members who want to conceal their identities.

People who want to hide their pasts like that change their names as they register. Because of this, it's an unspoken rule to not ask about an adventurer's past. In other words, it's an occupation where many do not reveal their pasts. It's an occupation people like us, or rather, me – someone who is being chased by the Kingdom – can easily disappear into.

A forest is the best place to hide a tree.

Considering our objective, the first and third benefits will definitely be useful. For Minnalis, the second benefit is apparently important as well.

And whatever happens, at the very least, as long as Yumis is in this city, it's almost certain that we're going to be in the city for more than ten days, so acquiring identification papers is of the utmost importance.

"Still, why are we going so early in the morning to arrive as soon as the Guild opens?" Minnalis asks as we walk down the main street at a time of day where the sun hasn't even shown itself, while the stores are still making preparations to open.

"I told you, it's because I want to avoid a 'cliché,'" I say.

Indeed, registration as an adventurer is a treasure box of clichés.

A senior adventurer picks a fight with a newbie who has just registered. After that, dealing with the situation causes the new adventurer to become noticed by an important person in the Guild. This causes people to trouble them or argue with them, or the Guild starts to monitor them. There are various other common patterns, and none of them turn out to be beneficial.

Benevolent protagonists actually continue on and get more involved, but becoming a

shitty useless slave like that during my first time through this world was more than enough for me.

“We can’t afford to draw attention so stupidly just yet,” I explain. “Anyway, for now, avoiding arguments is the number one priority. That’s why we’re going early in the morning and sorting out the registration while there aren’t many people around.”

Minnalis sighed. “Well, I’ve heard of that before, but...” Seemingly not entirely satisfied, she tilted her head a little.

Even in this world, in heroic tales where new adventurers rise up to become great people, most of them have a stupid character charge at the protagonist when he registers as an adventurer. So Minnalis does have some knowledge regarding this, but she doesn’t seem convinced.

Well, it’s true that I can’t blame her for questioning the fact that we’re acting under the assumption that something like that is going to happen. But during my first time through this world, when I registered at the Adventurers’ Guild in the royal capital city, things played out exactly according to this cliché. I easily took care of the guy who charged at me, and as dictated by the pattern of an adventurer with potential but problems with violent behavior, I had a formal interview with the head of the Guild. I was registering to acquire an identity as someone other than being the hero, but I hadn’t imagined that such a cliché would occur and my real identity would be revealed right away.

As I reminisce about this, the wooden building that is the Adventurers’ Guild of Ermia comes into view.

At the front, there is a hanging sign bearing a crest that consists of a shield and a sword with a pair of wings, and the building itself is extraordinarily large compared to the other buildings.

As soon as we come close to the building, I search for people’s presences inside without entering.

“Alright, just as I thought, there aren’t many people,” I say.

“...Is it really necessary to go so far?” Minnalis asks in exasperation, but she doesn’t understand.

She really doesn't understand.

"Listen, Minnalis," I say. "This has already become a curse. Just like how I am certain to be dragged into a fight with hoodlums when I enter the slum quarters, people like me who have come from another world are certain to get involved in that kind of thing when we register as adventurers. If I can consciously avoid it, there's no harm in doing so."

Minnalis sighed. "I see. That is how it is."

I can understand why she's skeptical, but she doesn't seem like she's going to say anything more. Seeing her like this, I start to get the feeling that I'm overthinking things.

No, if I'm overthinking things, then I'm fine with that. If that's the case, then that just means that things are going to go smoothly, without incident.

I lead Minnalis inside the Adventurers' Guild and head straight towards the reception desk.

Chapter 7

The Hero Registers As An Adventurer

As we enter the guild, we find that it seems that almost no other adventurers other than us have come to visit, just as I expected.

The inside of the guild, which is like a restaurant and bar, is quite spacious.

Still, there are many adventurers in this city; during busy hours, so many people gather in this building that it starts to feel too small. The adventurers that are currently standing around are looking at the few request forms that are hanging on the quest board.

That's because new quests are posted after midday. The reason for that is partially to make the bar that's a part of the guild thrive.

Quests are generally first-come, first-served. Getting relatively good work when the new quests are posted means inevitably coming to the guild at noon and dropping money for food at the bar. The reason it's not done in the morning is because lunch-time is when hunger firmly sets in, causing the adventurers to place more orders, and because a lot of people combine breakfast and lunch into one meal.

The reason that most adventurers begin moving just a little before noon is because if they haven't already accepted a request, their schedules are flexible and they are unable to oppose the temptations of laziness, and this system is likely promoted to match this behavior. But in the end, the guild needs to sustain itself as well, so they're not doing anything wrong.

"Now then..."

After quickly looking around the guild once more, I head towards the reception desk once more. The reception desk is made of something resembling plywood, and each booth has a single receptionist sitting in it.

There are two types of people among the receptionists lined up in the Adventurers' Guild. You have what are known as the beautiful female receptionists, and

receptionists who are so muscular that it's difficult for them to be doing office-type work, exuding an intimidating presence.

Adventurers are casual people, so a lot of them are ignorant when it comes to culture and manners, and there are many who live by the logic of strength.

That doesn't mean that all adventurers are like that; higher-rank adventurers have more experience and realize how useful it is to have connections and interactions with others, so fewer of them have these qualities. But the unfortunate reality is that as a whole, many adventurers are vulgar people.

That's why the guild has selected their employees like this so they can hold the reins in a way, preventing these kinds of adventurers from acting forcefully.

The numerous beautiful female receptionists are apparently there to help relieve things. It would be problematic to intimidate those that come to accept requests, and in a way, these receptionists are even more effective for holding the reins on some of the young, inexperienced adventurers.

As I head to the second closest reception desk, a female receptionist calls out to me with a businesslike smile.

"Good morning. What business do you have with us today?"

I get the feeling that Minnalis's eyes have become a bit reproachful, but I pay her no attention.

Why should I have to go and spend a sad morning sitting next to a filthy man? I don't really care about their looks, but in this situation where I can choose anyone I like, I don't see any reason for me to choose to go to an enormous man that looks like he raises the temperature of his surroundings by five degrees Celsius. I'm not a homo, you know.

"Me and this girl want to register as adventurers," I say.

"Register as adventurers?"

The receptionist's gaze runs quickly up and down, as if she's evaluating us.

The way she looks at people is too conspicuous. She's a newbie.

“My apologies, but registration as an adventurer is only possible from the age of fourteen onwards,” she says. “Until then, you can become apprentices, and although your ranks won’t increase, you can accept safe, miscellaneous tasks in the city. You will not receive the privilege of being exempt from city entrance fees, but you can participate in the elementary-level adventurer training course held by the guild, free of...”

“Ah, no, I’m over fourteen,” I tell the receptionist. “I’m seventeen years old, and she is sixteen.”

The reason it took me a moment to respond is because I’ve physically experienced over twenty years of life, but since the age displayed on my Status is seventeen, this is probably the correct choice.

“Eh?” The receptionist blinks in surprise and gives me a spectacular expression of astonishment. I’m already used to this kind of reaction from my first time through this world.

She’s too inexperienced; both her behavior and the way her gaze is completely fixed on me show that plainly. It’s easy to see exactly how she looks at someone and what she thinks of them. Of course, it’s not like my face looks young. This is truly the magic of Japanese people.

To be honest, I’m completely used to it already so I don’t think anything of it. But it looks like I’ll need to have a word later with Minnalis, who is having to even use her Audacity skill in what appears to be an attempt to suppress her laughter.

“Certainly. Now then, could I ask you to touch this crystal, please?” The receptionist produces a baseball-sized crystal ball that’s known as an Age-reading Orb.

As its name suggests, it’s a magical tool that reads the age of the person who holds it in their hand, and although I don’t know the details of how it works, it turns red when the person holding it is younger than fourteen, and blue if they are older.

“If you touch this, it will turn red if you are below fourteen years of age, and blue if you are above,” the receptionist explains. “This age limit is something that has been agreed on by every nation, so please understand that no matter what kind of social position you may be in, this rule must be obeyed.”

The fact that she went out of her way to add that last part probably means that she

suspects that I'm trying to become a nobleman or something.

It seems that she did once see the slave mark on Minnalis's neck, so there's no mistake.

Slaves are generally expensive. Even the clothes that Minnalis is wearing, I paid a considerable price for them in the royal capital, so they're well-tailored. In other words, I should appear as someone who doesn't really face difficulties when it comes to money. That's probably why this receptionist thought that I was the foolish son of a nobleman ignorant of the ways of this world, unaware of the Age-reading Orb's existence and trying to use my powerful influence to make things go my way.

In fact, that kind of thing is apparently not that uncommon. Pigs who have been raised in privileged families try to have their way with everything, mistakenly thinking that this will work in the outside world.

But knowing that this is a reasonable evaluation of the situation doesn't change the fact that it feels unpleasant to have this seen by my partner.

The receptionist is smiling at me during our interactions, but the fact that she's looking down at me is clear as day.

Minnalis seems to have seen this as well; she has undone her Audacity skill and her expression is one of slight displeasure.

Wait, calm down, this is actually convenient, isn't it? I tell myself.

The two of us look young; I should have expected that we would be looked down on to some extent. And we didn't come here to show off how strong we are; we've already accomplished our goal of not attracting any unnecessary attention. With that said, it is still irritating.

Once I calm down and take the Age-reading Orb from the receptionist, it gives off a clear blue light inside my hand.

"Minnalis," I say, flinging the Age-reading Orb across.

"Yes." Minnalis catches it in both hands.

The Age-Reading Orb gives off a blue light in her hands as well.

“I apologize for my rudeness,” says the receptionist. “But that Age-reading Orb is among the more valuable of the guild’s equipment, so please handle it more carefully.” She sounds displeased.

It seems that this receptionist is a very proud person. The fact that she has been given the responsibility of being a receptionist despite not having much experience means that she’s probably quite the hard worker, but honestly, the thought of intimidating her with some light overwhelming pressure did cross my mind.

Well, it’s not difficult to imagine the brawny, macho, combat receptionists would come flying in if I were to make any direct moves, so I can’t do that.

“Ah, my apologies. It did not appear to be such a valuable item to me. I thought you would not mind me treating it the way the guild treats adventurers.” I give the receptionist a smile with my poison-injected words.

“...”

I haven’t released any mana or used any skills, but I’ve indirectly told her that I can see exactly what she’s doing, and it seems that she’s caught my drift.

“No matter,” I say. “I wonder if you could hurry and bring the registration forms, Receptionist-san?”

“Y-yes, I will bring them now.” The receptionist hurriedly withdraws towards the back of the building.

“Goshujin-sama, your method was somewhat lukewarm; it seems that it would have only made her more frustrated instead,” says Minnalis. “Should you not have gone a little further?”

“No. Why do you think we came here so early in the morning? If we performed any physical pressure on the receptionist, that would go to waste now, wouldn’t it?”

“That is, well, true. But the thought of being looked down upon by a blind pig is...”

I get the feeling that Minnalis-san is a little stricter than usual. The receptionist’s attitude irritated me as well, but to be honest, I don’t really care as long as she doesn’t make things difficult for us.

“These are the adventurer registration forms,” the receptionist says as she returns. “We can arrange for someone to fill it out on your behalf for one copper coin; will this be necessary?”

“No, there’s no need for that,” I tell her.

I hand one of the two forms to Minnalis and fill in the blanks.

We hand the forms to the receptionist when we’re done.

“Kaito-san and Minnalis-san, your ages are seventeen and sixteen, your races are human and rabbit beast-person and both of you use swordsmanship in combat. Your party name is ‘Scorn Road?’ Is this all correct?” the receptionist asks.

“Yes, we will go with that,” I say.

“Then I will make your Guild Cards with these details. The preparation of Guild Cards takes a little time, so please feel free to sit down over there while waiting.” The receptionist points at a sofa next to a bookshelf. “The bookshelf contains some books with the details of what being an adventurer entails. If necessary, someone can explain these to you out loud later, but it seems that you have no problems reading and writing, so it would be splendid if you could read them while waiting. There are also monster guides with details such as the body parts used as proof of their extermination and their known weaknesses, as well as guides on medicinal and poisonous plants with details such as how and where they grow and what precautions need to be taken while harvesting them. Please read these if you wish. Now then, please excuse me.”

Having told us everything she can, the receptionist leaves.

Since we do have some free time while we’re waiting, I do as the receptionist suggested and take a small pamphlet from the bookshelf.

The pamphlet in my hand is about adventurers. During my first time through this world, I used the appraisal ability of the Eight-eyed Transparent Tome Sword on the common kinds of monsters, medicinal herbs and poisonous plants and recorded their detailed data in the sword.

During my first time through this world, the fact that I was a Hero was found out and I was half-given special rights and placed at the highest rank without doing anything,

so I don't know the detailed workings of the adventurer occupation.

With that said, this stuff isn't new information.

By completing Jobs and raising your rank, you can accept more requests.

Adventurers are not charged when entering or leaving cities.

Even when travelling across a nation, as long as it is not during a war, the guild confirms your social status so it is easy to go through.

But there are some things that I didn't know.

In addition to individual adventurer ranks, there are apparently also party ranks that evaluate parties.

Even if all party members are E-rank adventurers, if they can use their coordination to work as well as D-rank adventurers, their party rank becomes D, and they can accept D-rank requests at the guild instead of being limited to E-rank requests.

And though I didn't know this because I was a Hero during my first time through this world, only those who have been evaluated to be D-rank or above, whether it be as individuals or as a party, are allowed to enter the dungeons that are jointly managed by the nations and the guild.

This is a troubling fact.

We'll be going into dungeons one day, but we can't afford to raise our rank too much in one go and draw attention to ourselves. I should probably discuss things with Minnalis later to figure out what we should do.

Once I've gone through the pamphlet, I turn it over to see a pyramid drawn on the back, detailing the standards by which the guild evaluates ranks. A rough description and the color of the plates that the adventurers of each rank receive upon registration is written here.

From the top rank of SS, going by order:
SS (White): The heroes of legends and fairy tales
S (Black): Powerful, superhuman individuals
A (Red): Incredible geniuses
B (Yellow): Highly skilled individuals
C (Green): Veteran adventurers
D (Blue): Qualified adventurers
E (Gray): Learning adventurers
F (Purple): Amateurs
Apprentice: Cannot register

It's something like this.

Apprentices don't receive plates, so there is no color for them written there.

Now that I've finished looking at this as well, I close the pamphlet and return it to the bookshelf.

Still, things are going pretty well. Was I overthinking things after all? I wonder.

A little while later, I realize that I've carelessly triggered a flag. No, I'm forced to realize it.

"Gahaha! How lucky for us to find an Aural Rabbit!"

"Yeah, though it was real good at running and hiding."

"Let us hurry and receive our payment; I am looking forward to see how much it is worth!"

Three men with excessively loud voices have entered through the guild's doors.

The moment I glance at them, I feel a sensation like an electrical shock passing across my skin.

"Goshujin-sama?" Minnalis calls out to me, as if having sensed the change in the atmosphere around me.

“...Ah, it really is like a curse of the cliché,” I murmur quietly with a small smile.

The only relationship I have with them is that I had a few drinks with them before.

But there is one detail that is particularly important to me.

...During my first time through this world, they treated me as criminals like everyone else and attacked me.

Chapter 8

The Hero Finds A Perfect Opportunity And Jumps Into The Cliché

After being betrayed and fleeing the battlefield, I hid myself in a city that I had never visited before in order to recover from my wounds.

After my injuries had healed to some extent, in order to gather information on what had happened, I concealed my identity and entered a bar, where I came to know those guys.

The leader, the man with the best physique, was named Barkas; the small, bucktoothed man was Dot and the thin, mage-like man was Terry, if I remember correctly.

That day, they'd become all drunk and festive after having been able to hunt some good prey. As if they were displeased by me drinking by myself in a depressed manner, they ordered me drink after drink like they were trying to drink me under the table.

Because I was feeling anxious and hopeless, I was grateful for the company of these bright, merry men. Before I knew it, I was drinking with them as if trying to forget the terrible reality that I was faced with, and became on such good terms with these men that we would drink together whenever we met each other in the bar at night. They sensed that I was hiding a secret, so they even went as far as to say that I could let them know if there was anything that they could do.

But after I visited that bar several days in a row, the fact that I was the Hero was exposed.

I was blamed for becoming the next Demon King and being a traitor of humanity, and no matter what I said, I was only met with hostility. I fled the bar, and then that was when Barkas and his friends appeared.

They'd apparently heard what happened at the bar and they told me that they would give me a place to hide, so I followed them. At this hiding place, they tricked me into

drinking water with sleeping powder and anesthetics mixed in. Through the guild, the nation had put a large bounty on my head.

Due to the resistance provided by my Soul Sword, I managed to avoid becoming immobilized immediately, but I was forced to spend that night hiding from Barkas and his friends, who were chasing me to try and kill me.

As I left the city while avoiding being seen, I saw them for the last time. With the same mouths that they had used to tell me that I could rely on them, they were howling that they would kill me the next time they met me and proactively spreading rumors about how much I fit the description of an evil person.

After that, I never met Barkas and his friends again.

Ah, I didn't think that I'd meet them in a place like this.

I find myself lost in thought for a while as I look at these men.

...That's right, they're not people I mustn't take revenge on, they're people I want to kill. So there's no problem, is there?

My hatred for former friends who betrayed me isn't all that high; they're people that I wouldn't have thought of going out of my way to hunt down.

But now that I've met them like this, they're people that I don't give a damn about. Of course, there's no way that I would let such a lucky opportunity pass me by.

"Minnalis, I'm going to kill them," I say. "Of course, in a way that doesn't obstruct our revenge on our main targets."

"...Very well, Goshujin-sama." Minnalis gives an understanding nod, as if she has already gained all kinds of information from my brief words.

Minnalis has probably gained a desire for this kind of strange, half-baked vengeance as well. It seems that my memories that she experienced didn't transfer all the small details perfectly, but the sharing of my desire for revenge seems to have worked just fine.

I think about what we should do as I eavesdrop on the men's conversation.

The trio, who have started eating breakfast at the bar inside the guild, seem to be raising a toast with the drinks on the menu, which are slightly on the expensive side. It appears that they were drinking all night right until just before they came here; they're deep in talk with red faces that show that they weren't able to completely sober up.

It seems that they found an Aural Rabbit on the way back from an Orc extermination, and after a great deal of effort, they managed to bring it down.

Aural Rabbits are rabbits, about fifty centimeters long, with small horns and mouths that look like they have a big split in them.

Their fighting ability is nonexistent and they have no defensive strength either, but they are ridiculously agile and they have the characteristic ability of blending their fur into the background, so defeating them is incredibly difficult.

And most importantly, they are rare characters. Their sense of caution is strong and they are exceptionally good at finding enemies, so it's really unusual to find them. This is why they are designated as extermination rank E, despite their lack of ability to fight.

However, Aural Rabbit meat is a delicacy. Their organs are used in medicine, their horns and claws are used as catalysts for the creation of expensive magical tools and their fur is used as a material to create high-grade furniture; their body parts are so valuable that capturing a single one would yield enough money to live on for a month.

That's apparently the reason these three came to the guild at this time of day, too.

They'd hunted the Aural Rabbit late into the night and by the time they got back to the city, there wasn't long left before the sky would start turning brighter. Of course, the guild wasn't open at such a time, so they apparently chose to pass the time at a nearby bar that they go to regularly and then come to the guild when it opened rather than coming home and sleeping. They borrowed some money from the guild, so they wanted to exchange the Aural Rabbit for money as soon as possible.

“ ... ”

Seeing them so happy over their high-quality prey reminds me of when I met them for the first time in a bar during my first time through this world; it's a little unpleasant.

As I flip through a monster guide that I'm not even reading and continue observing, another person enters the guild, a young man with a small figure.

He appears to be about the same age as me, but he's probably actually a little younger.

This bright-blond-haired young man is clad in leather armor beneath his brown robe and has a single staff in his hand.

He looks around at his surroundings restlessly before heading to the reception counter.

Of course, he heads not towards one of the muscular, male receptionists, but towards a quiet-beauty-type female receptionist.

It seems that Barkas has just finished eating, and is the only one among his trio to have done so. With his face red from still being slightly drunk and his cheerful mood clearly visible, he heads towards the counter and –

“Hohoh.”

As expected, a conflict between the young man and the adventurer trio begins.

The young man, who appears to have come to register as an adventurer, is quarreling with the red-faced, drunken adventurer.

It seems that the one who has been caught in this cliché is not me, but this young man.

“Say, Minnalis. This kind of thing happens quite often, doesn't it?” Leaving the various circumstances aside, I give Minnalis a broad grin. Her face shows that she's so disgruntled that I can almost hear her disgruntlement.

“I-it is a coincidence,” she says. “And since we were not the ones who were caught up in it, I do not admit defeat.”

I mean, it's not like it was a competition.

And I wouldn't be particularly happy even if I won.

I regain my focus and try to listen into the details of the argument. It seems that it's the young man who came to register as an adventurer who started the fight, not the one from the trio.

It seems that the young man looks at the adventurer profession as some kind of dream, and ended up saying things like, “How can adventurers be drinking from so early in the morning?” and, “This is why your ranks won’t increase,” making me wonder whether it really is their first time meeting each other.

Of course, this adventurer isn’t the type who would control himself after having such things said to him, and he’s angry from having cold water dumped on his merry, drunken mood from having good things happen for him.

Despite the roles of the cliché being reversed, the adventurer has taken on what can be described as an overbearing attitude and is retorting with the typical cliché lines like, “What does a brat like you know?” and, “Being an adventurer isn’t the dream-filled line of work you think it is.”

It seems that the cliché is a curse after all.

The argument remains a verbal one because the guild’s eyes are on them, but if that weren’t the case, it might have already escalated into a fistfight.

This kind of argument is an everyday occurrence, so the guild doesn’t bother interfering as long as the conflict remains verbal.

As if in a great hurry, the receptionist calls out to us despite the fact that there is an argument happening in the next booth over, right in front of her eyes.

“Kaito-san, Minnalis-san. My apologies for keeping you waiting.”

“Read the damn mood...!” I curse.

“That woman... shall I pulverize her into mincemeat?” Minnalis asks.

Because the receptionist called out to me while I was seeing how the argument was progressing, I ended up making perfect eye contact with her. Of course, I can’t just pretend that I didn’t notice her.

“...No, I suppose this is actually convenient.”

I wanted to watch from a distance for a little longer, but it can’t be helped. That young man is a bit of a nuisance, but now that things have come to this, I’ll just make use of this argument.

If I approach and get caught up in it, then that's fine. If I can use that as an excuse to get a word in and manage to entice them successfully, it would remove the need for various preliminary preparations.

In any case, receiving our Guild Cards comes first.

"These are your Guild Cards," the receptionist says. "Re-issuing Guild Cards will cost five silver coins, so please take care not to lose them."

She hands us thin, pale yellow card-shaped objects about the size of a small wallet. It feels like it's made of plastic, but this is apparently made by processing some monster material.

"Please place a drop of your blood here on your card," the receptionist says. "This makes it impossible for the card's recorded information to be displayed except at the guild or if the owner desires it."

I take the needle she hands to me and make a small prick on my fingertip, putting a drop of my blood on the plate.

It gives off a momentary flash of pale light before returning to its original state.

But as I silently command it, writing appears on the card as if floating to the surface from inside.

=====

Name: Kaito

Age: 17

Race: Human

Battle role: Swordsman

Adventurer rank: F

Party rank: F

Party: Scorn Road

=====

I peek at Minnalis's as well to see that it has information written there in the same way.

ステータス

名前：カイト

年齢：17 歳

種族：人族

戦闘職：剣士

冒険者ランク：F

パーティーランク：F

所属パーティー：『スコーン・ロード』



名前：ミナリス

年齢：16 歳

種族：兎人族

戦闘職：剣士

冒険者ランク：F

パーティーランク：F

所属パーティー：『スコーン・ロード』



“Also, this is the plate that shows your adventurer rank,” the receptionist adds. “You are F-rank, so your plate is purple. If you show this to any city’s gate guard, you will be exempt from the city entrance fee, so please take it with you when you accept requests outside the city.

“Is there a need to put the plates where they can be seen?” I ask.

“No; it does not matter as long as you have it on your person when you enter and exit the city, so there is no need to place it where it can be seen. However, they do act as a kind of status symbol, so there are some who place their cards where it can be constantly seen once their ranks have increased to a certain extent.”

Well, there aren’t any cities that have what I, a former Japanese person, would call good public order. It goes without saying for the slums, but even outside of those kinds of places, there are idiots who act like bosses who can only engage in physical fights.

With a high-enough rank, the number of small-fry picking fights with you would probably decrease, too.

While we were having this conversation, the petty argument nearby has been continuing. It seems that the other two members of the trio have joined in partway through, and now they’re surrounding the young man as they confront him.

I know that the young man has been silently imploring us with his eyes to help him while we were talking to the receptionist now that he is in a three-on-one situation.

It’s obvious that he wants our help despite knowing that we’re of similar age to him and we are newbies who have just finished registering.

So if we seem like we’re just going to leave without saying anything...

“H-hey, don’t you guys think so as well?!” The boy calls out to us in a panicked voice.

“Eh? Ah, huh.” I smile on the inside.

It’s great for me that he’s such a simple boy. With this, Minnalis and I are both third-party individuals who have been caught up in this entirely by coincidence.

“It’s because there are adventurers like you with no ambitions, who are happy after hunting a weak, rare animal and get drunk in the morning, that people think lowly of

adventurers as a whole!" the young man exclaims.

"Huh?! This brat, after I let him have his say..."

"Hey, Barkas-san, going any further'd be bad." Dot moves forward to hold Barkas back.

Terry is also avoiding eye contact, as if pleading with his eyes.

There's a rough-looking man who has been watching the argument through half-closed eyes from a receptionist's chair.

But he's not only rough-looking; most people with his occupation are famous adventurers who settled down with this job after retiring, so his physical strength is certainly real.

"Well, I've been listening to your conversation for a while, so how about this? We will accept some kind of monster extermination request together. Why don't we have a competition to see who can hunt more monsters in a day?" I suggest.

Both parties look at me, seemingly interested.

"It seems like nobody will reach any conclusions by continuing this verbal argument, and this way would be better to show your strengths as adventurers better than having a foolish fistfight once you leave this place, wouldn't it?" I continue. "The winner will take all the rewards. There would be no problems with this, would there?" I add, looking at the receptionist that I was talking to up until now.

"Y-yes, the exchange of money through personal conflicts is prohibited in this city, but with this method, the guild will not interfere," she replies.

The exchange of money through personal conflicts is prohibited.

This is apparently an agreement that came about due to repeated occurrences of overly self-conscious newcomers having money taken from them in incidents such as these. It's not a crime, but the guild hands out proper punishments for it.

In other words, even if both parties fight each other directly to settle things, both sides suffer, no matter who wins or loses. The only thing that is satisfied is their pride.

"Tch, well, I suppose it'll be good entertainment," Barkas says as he runs his eyes over

the young man, having seemingly sobered up.

Even if they were to fight one-on-one, Barkas would never lose. I'm sure that Barkas himself is aware of this difference in strength, but the young man is dressed like a mage.

Magic generally has high power; it's unlikely that Barkas would escape with light injuries after taking a direct hit. It seems that these guys are not stupid enough to take this risk for a contest with no physical reward.

"I don't mind these terms either; in fact, it's just what I want. What will be our prey?" the young man asks.

"Hah, there's no way that there would be any requests that an F-rank like you who just registered today could accept. This one," Barkas says as he tears off a single request form.

The request is for Goblin extermination. It is considered complete after five Goblins, and each Goblin after that yields an individual reward.

"With your ranks as they are now, this is the only one we can accept," Barkas says, waving the request form around.

"Kuh, I might certainly be an F-rank adventurer who registered today, but I'll have you know that I'm a mage who can even use the Fire Lance spell. My natural abilities are on a different level from people like you!" says the young man.

Barkas's eyes narrow in suspicion.

Fire Lance is a spell of considerable difficulty. Its destructive ability, power and the amount of MP it consumes are all high, and it needs a large degree of control as well. Being able to use it at his age gives the young man plenty of reason to be arrogant.

...Well, that's only if he is able to control it with his own abilities alone, though.

I perform a quick appraisal on the staff that the young man is holding to find that it has a 'Flame Magic Bonus' enchantment on it. Its quality as a staff is high; it's clearly a weapon that's worth several gold coins.

It seems that Barkas has realized this as well; his eyes contain desire the color of

sludge that you'd find in the bottom of a swamp.

I suddenly become curious and pour mana into the Eight-eyed Transparent Tome Sword hanging from my waist to peek at Barkas's Status.

"...Huh, this is..."

"I see, so that is how it is."

Minnalis and I are whispering to each other quietly so as not to be noticed by the others, who have their attentions focused on each other.

As we peek at his Status, we see a single ability in the unique skill column.

...'Gold Vein Olfaction.'

"Either way, things look like they're going to get interesting, don't they?" I whisper.

"Yes, they do," Minnalis agrees.

I return my gaze to the three men, who are still arguing, once more.

Barkas, Dot, Terry.

There are plenty of people who did the same thing that you did, and it's not like I remember all of them. The life of running I lived during my first time through this world wasn't so easy that I can remember the faces of the masses.

So this means that you guys were just unlucky.

It's just a matter of you just coincidentally happening to be in a position that made you memorable.

A matter of you happening to meet us in this city that has a large population.

A matter of you happening to encounter avengers who have no desire to act in a fair, logical way.

A matter of you being unlucky, just as I happened to be summoned out of the 7.3 billion people on Earth.

That's why this is...

Just a matter of this being how things started here today.

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to it," I murmur.

And then the two of us laugh quietly so as not to be heard.

Right in front of us, we have people that we can freely enjoy killing.

Prey that we can kill without having our consciences blame us. Right now, that is good enough.

"I'm really looking forward to it."

My entire head is already filled with how I should make these three suffer as I kill them.

Chapter 9

The Hero Suffers An Unexpected Ambush

The bet was set to be settled tomorrow. Our two parties would enter the forest simultaneously and compete to see which could hunt the most goblins before sundown. I, of course, had been the one to negotiate the terms, and managed to do so rather favourably save for a single mistake. I had only intended on providing the young mage an idea, but I ended up getting dragged into the competition as one of his allies.

The mage had complained that it wouldn't be fair for him to take on a party of three all by himself. The adventurers also didn't want to be known for throwing their whole party at a single newbie, so they effectively just forced me, the person who'd suggested the idea, to be a part of it.

Another annoying circumstance was the fact that adventurers thought that both the adventurers and the mage turned down the option of just turning the whole thing into a 1v1. The former thought it'd be unfair, whereas the latter simply didn't want to do it that way. I wanted to refuse regardless, but we'd already kicked up a fuss and a lot of other adventurers had already started gathering in our vicinity. I didn't want to stand out any more than I already had, so I ultimately ended up just nodding along and agreeing.

That, of course, still wasn't the last of my problems. The most important one of all was that I didn't want people to think that Barkas and I were at odds with each other; I wanted to stay free of doubt when the time came.

Hence, I declared, right in front of the guild's receptionist, that we would be adding directly to the mage's kill count, but not directly participating in the bet. That is, we wouldn't be putting the materials we earned on the line. The mage kid would get all of the adventurer party's loot if we won. The adventurers would only be getting his loot if they won. It was a suggestion that wrote us off as stakeholders in the matter. We were just supporting actors there to fill up the roster.

Both Dot and Terry seemed a bit reluctant about agreeing to terms in the mage's favour, but we managed to convince them that we deserved a handicap seeing as how we were not only just passersby that ended up getting forcibly dragged into the

situation, but also newly registered adventurers to boot.

Another statement that aided us in convincing them was the fact that we said we would hand over a third of our total earnings regardless of how much the mage actually got done. Abiding by said methodology would prevent us from gimping Barkas' party by claiming that Minnalis and I did everything, and that the mage had just been an accessory.

Barkas hadn't really said much throughout the negotiation. He had kept his mouth shut as he scanned the mage's staff and Minnalis' body in turn.

His thoughts were ridiculously easy to read.

The fact that he'd given Minnalis a lewd gaze bothered me a bit, but the feeling was overwritten by the urge to laugh at his sheer simplicity.

Barkas and his goons parted with us shortly after finishing up all the negotiations. We all agreed to meet up at the guild again sometime tomorrow night in order to settle everything. His party of three didn't seem too intent on going back to the guild's bar, and instead left the building without so much as even converting the Aural Rabbit they caught to cash.

It looked like he hadn't even the slightest clue about our schemes. In fact, he and his buddies had already started talking about how they were going to drinking somewhere else.

"We should probably head off too. We've got lots of thinking to do for tomorrow's sake."

"Okay."

"Er, could I have a minute before you guys go?"

The mage called out to us before we could get on with our business.

"Sorry about getting you involved. I couldn't help but have you help me out cause I felt like we were pretty similar. I'd like to talk to you a bit about what we'll do tomorrow, so please do let me apologize by treating you to breakfast if you haven't had it already."

I couldn't help respond to the young man's words with a blank stare.

Yeah no, I didn't really see how I had even the slightest resemblance to someone that went out of his way to pick a fight with a group of adventurers for what was basically no reason, but, thinking back on it, the mage boy seemed pretty clumsy. The way he asked for help was nothing short of awkward. I didn't feel any ill will from him, but it seemed as if he was still hiding something. Wait, what did he mean by me being similar to him in the first place? Thinking about his statement further only made me all the more wary of him.

My most likely conjecture was that he thought of me as some sort of noble, and meant we were similar in that regard.

(So I'm guessing that means he's feeling a sense of amity?)

Both the way he walked and carried himself were rather indicative of the fact that he was of noble birth. He didn't seem to be the type that decided to become an adventurer because his family had fallen from grace either, so chances were, he was probably some household's third, fourth or nth son. It was fairly typical for all sons beyond the second to leave the house and seek a living of their own, as the first son would be treated as the family's successor, and the second his spare, just in case.

In other words, the mage had thought of me as the nth son of some sort of noble. A bit of thought led me to realize that it was only logical. It wasn't unusual for adventurers to own slaves, but the only total newbies that had them were ones that had access to some other source of significant income.

"We've already had breakfast, but I don't think there's any need for you to be worried about having bothered us. Helping those in need is only natural, after all."

I smiled as I shrugged my shoulders.

I couldn't be bothered to correct him because we hadn't really been inconvenienced, so I just kinda left things as is and brushed him off.

"Alright. In that case, I'll make sure I share the reward with you and treat you to a meal if we end up winning tomorrow."

The young mage ended the conversation and headed back towards the receptionist's desk.

Minnalis and I chose to leave the guild as well, as there wasn't really any reason for us

to stay much longer.

“I should’ve known that people see newbies with slaves as nobles.”

We’d purposefully refrained from hiding Minnalis’ slave crest as it’d make it obvious that she was my slave, and hence, ward off any that happened to be captivated by her charms. I’d never actually expected that our course of action would lead to people mistaking me for a noble.

“A few people already know, so it might not be all that effective, but do you want to try hiding your crest?”

“I’d... like to leave it as is. I don’t think that being taken for a noble really puts us at any sort of disadvantage. Besides, we’ll probably run into other unexpected problems if I hide the fact that I’m a slave.”

Minnalis answered after spending a moment to think things over.

“You would probably get swarmed by men, namely male adventurers, if you don’t hide the fact that you were a slave. Most people wouldn’t really care about the fact that you were a beastkin so long as you did your job right. You also have to take into account the fact that you’re quite the beauty, so you’d probably have them flock to you by the dozens.”

“...I don’t really think I’m beautiful. Aren’t you just overthinking things, Goshujin-sama?” ^[1]

Minnalis’ face stiffened up and entered into an unchanging state. It seemed that she couldn’t really accept the fact that she was a beauty. Either that, or she was just getting all embarrassed. I couldn’t tell if poker face she was wearing was natural, or simply the result of that skill of hers.

Either way, I wanted her to be more aware of how she appeared. It was pretty important to know what other people thought of your looks.

“I’m serious. I’m convinced that you’re both cute and pretty. In fact, I’m willing to bet that most guys would feel the same.”

“Well... Alright.”

Her expression still remained unchanged despite the extent of my praise. Complimenting her the way I did made me feel a bit embarrassed in spite of the fact that I didn't really view her in any sort of romantic light, so I changed the topic back to what it was before.

"Still, I do think that it'd be a bit of a pain for us to reject each and every single person that tries to flirt with you, and it's not like we can go around killing them all either. Besides..."

"Besides what?"

"The fact that you're a slave means that people might try and approach you through underhanded means. We could use people like that, make them take part in a few of our experiments. For example, you could try checking whether or not goblins can actually understand human speech."

I've decided to try my best not to get random bystanders involved when carrying out vengeance. There were several reasons for which I made that decision, the most important of which being that I might go insane, which, in turn, would make me unable bring myself to face Retishia. Casting my sanity aside would be akin to junking everything she's ever given me.

My reluctance to indiscriminate murder, however, only applied to those qualified as human beings. Scum that functioned purely off instinct didn't count. They were practically monsters, goblins, creatures that I needed not think of as intelligent.

Still, there was no point in just killing them. Even garbage had its use.



We began stuffing all the stuff we needed for tomorrow into one of our Round Pouches after buying all the medicinal and poisonous plants that we thought might come in handy.

I grabbed the 『Sword of the Eight Eye's Transparent Tome』 off my waist and poured a bit of magical energy inside in order to pull up a list of the stuff I'd used it to appraise thus far.

To be more specific, I pulled up all Barkas' stats, alongside his companions'.

=====

Barkas: 31 Years Old, Male
HP: 682/682
MP: 569/569
Level: 43
STR: 399
VIT: 357
STAM: 390
AGI: 418
MGC: 331
MR: 391
Innate Ability: Gold Seeking Nose
Skills

- Sword Arts Lv 6
- Tracking: Lv 2
- Presence Suppression: Lv 3
- Night Vision: Lv 2
- Bodily Control: Lv 3
- Dismantling: Lv 5
- Strengthened Magic: Lv 3

Condition: Good (Tipsy)

=====

=====

Dot: 28 Years Old, Male
HP: 561/561
MP: 348/348
Level: 37
STR: 253
VIT: 394
STAM: 325
AGI: 457
MGC: 217
MR: 319
Innate Ability: N/A
Skills

- Shortsword Arts: Lv 4
- Sword Arts: Lv 1

- Tracking: Lv 5
- Stealth: Lv 3
- Night Vision: Lv 3
- Bodily Control: Lv 2
- Presence Detection: Lv 2
- Dismantling: Lv 6
- Lesser Reinforced Vision: Lv 2
- Art of Reconnaissance: Lv 2

Condition: Good (Tipsy)

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Terry: 29 Years Old, Male

HP: 415/415

MP: 630/630

Level: 39

STR: 94

VIT: 214

STAM: 275

AGI: 247

MGC: 549

MR: 499

Innate Ability: N/A

Skills

- Staff Arts: Lv 2
- Tracking: Lv 1
- Night Vision: Lv 2
- Water Magic: Lv 5
- Magic Manipulation: Lv 3
- Meditation: Lv 3
- MP Cost Reduction: Lv 2
- Dismantling: Lv 5

Condition: Good (Tipsy)

=====

ステータス

ザイリィ

Lv43

Zuily

31 歳 女 人族

HP : 682/682 MP : 569/569

筋力 : 399 体力 : 357

耐久 : 390 敏捷 : 418

魔力 : 331 魔耐 : 391

固有技能 : 『金脈の嗅覚』

ス キ ル : 『剣術 Lv6』 『追跡 Lv2』 『気配隠蔽 Lv3』

『暗視 Lv2』 『身体操作 Lv3』

『剥ぎ取り Lv5』 『強化系魔法 Lv3』

状 態 : 良好 (微酔)

ステータス

ドット

Lv37

Dot

28 歳 男 人族

HP : 561/561 MP : 348/348

筋力 : 253 体力 : 394

耐久 : 325 敏捷 : 457

魔力 : 217 魔耐 : 317

固有技能 : なし

ス キ ル : 『短剣術 Lv4』 『剣術 Lv1』 『追跡 Lv5』

『隠蔽 Lv3』 『暗視 Lv3』 『身体操作 Lv2』

『気配察知 Lv2』 『剥ぎ取り Lv6』

『視覚微強化 Lv2』 『偵察術 Lv2』

状 態 : 良好 (微酔)

ステータス

テリー

Lv39

Terry

29 歳 男 人族

HP : 415/415 MP : 630/630

筋力 : 94 体力 : 214

耐久 : 275 敏捷 : 247

魔力 : 549 魔耐 : 499

固有技能 : なし

ス キ ル : 『弓術 Lv3』 『追跡 Lv1』 『暗視 Lv2』

『風術魔法 Lv2』 『魔力操作 Lv3』

『瞑想 Lv3』 『鷹の目 Lv2』

『剥ぎ取り Lv5』

状 態 : 良好 (微酔)

“They have a swordsman as their vanguard, a scout for reconnaissance, and a mage taking up the rear.”

“Their party seems quite balanced.”

I vaguely remember them claiming to be a C ranked party back when I first met them. I’ve no idea as to whether or not they were bluffing, but if I were to guess, I’d say that the party’s leader was most likely a C rank at the time, whereas its members were probably both D ranks.

That, however, was how they’d end up turning out 3 years from now. As of right now, their stats seemed to belay the fact that they were all at least a whole rank’s worth weaker than they would ultimately end up being. In other words, they were about as strong as E ranked adventurers, and their party was probably a D ranked party at best.

I couldn’t immediately tell what Barkas’ innate ability did, so I appraised it, only to find that it granted him the ability to intuitively identify that of which was of significant monetary value.

The skill’s phrasing left me in doubt. The skill didn’t seem to grant knowledge, function like appraisal, or even have the ability to examine an object’s composition.

It seemed that it was capable of identifying specifically when something was worth cash — which would make it fairly accurate, seeing as how it was impossible for anyone to use my Spirit Blades without my permission. That is, neither the [Sword of the Eight Eye’s Transparent Tome] nor the [Round Squirrel’s Pouch Blade] could actually be sold for cash, and hence, his skill failed to react to them despite the extent of their abilities.

“Now, how exactly should we go about doing things this time around?”

I muttered under my breath whilst getting rid of the displays that displayed Barkas’ and his goon’s stats.

“There are still a few things we’ve yet to try out on monsters...”

Minnalis offered a suggestion.

“Nah, let’s not. Those methods are good, and using them on monsters does help me brainstorm, but most of them are primitive and are centered around inflicting pain.”

We weren't able to communicate with them, and they didn't really seem capable of any sort of deep thought. Hence, we weren't able to get much out of testing anything that had even the slightest bit of complexity to it.

"It'd be wasteful for us not to try out something a bit more complicated seeing as how we've finally got ourselves some humans to test things on. I think we'd probably benefit more from doing something that invokes a sense of fear. That's why we should *^&\$ and %^\$^%\$&^% before we kill them."

I let Minnalis in on my idea.

"That does sound pretty interesting, but is it actually possible?"

"I think so? Why don't we go try it out on a goblin or something after lunch, just to be sure?"

Minnalis agreed and joined me as I stood up and got ready to leave.

"The only problem is that they wouldn't really be able to feel any pain if we just did that. Wouldn't it be better for us to hurt them a bit first?"

"Sure, but do hold back a bit. Try not to make them want to kill themselves or wish for death right off the bat. I want a good piece of torture for myself."

"Oh come on, Goshujin-sama! You're not the one that got stuck having to put up with their disgusting gazes. You had so little of an impression on them that I was only barely made aware of them when we shared our thirsts for vengeance, so I can tell you for sure that they bother me more than they bother you. Shouldn't you be the one pulling your punches here?"

"Ugh, fine, I guess you do have a point. We'll each have an even split. I won't yield anything more than that. I do still hate them quite a bit, you know?"

The two of us chatted away as we descended the inn's stairs.

"Are you two head out again already? I could swear you only just got back."

The lady that owned the inn called out to us right before we headed out the door.

"Yup. Goshujin-sama's taking me out on a date."

“W-What? M-Minnalis?”

Minnalis spoke whilst retaining her poker face.

“(Goshujin-sama, you do know that people can transfer the rights to their slaves to another, right? People might try buying me off of you if we don’t seem too intimate. People typically won’t sell off any slaves they’re fond of, so you need to act like you’re really attached to me if you want to keep all the bugs away.)”

Minnalis brought herself closer to me and whispered so that only I’d hear her.

“(I mean, you do have a point, but...)”

The innkeeper glanced over at Minnalis and take note of her lack of an expression.

I know I literally just said it, but, to emphasize and reiterate, Minnalis had a *complete* and *utter* lack of an expression.

Didn’t her deadpan expression make her actions have an effect opposite of the ones she’d been expecting? I’m pretty sure she just made me look like some prick forcing a slave to act as his lover.

“(Hey Minnalis, could you do me a favour and smile? At least put on a fake one since you’re acting anyway, okay? If pretending to be intimate embarrasses you to the point where you need to use a skill to cover it up, then you might as well not do it in the first place. Okay? So can you just smile already? Right now? Please?)”

The innkeeper looked at me. Her eyes were not only filled with pity, but also like those of a dead fish. They seemed to burn their way into my soul.

Hey, Minnalis? Could you not like, just stare blankly? Come on...

We’d been planning to leave in the first place, so I ended up deciding to just hurry the hell out of the inn.

I never thought I’d be met with *that* kind of ambush. I’m pretty sure that the innkeeper is still misunderstanding the relationship between Minnalis and I. The very consideration of the fact that she might look at me like that again later made me kind of want to cry and even shit myself. Luckily, I didn’t do either.

[1] “Master” in the slavery sense of the word. Also used by maids and the like. See the note on the blog post associated for this chapter if you’d like to know why I started weebing stuff up a bit more.

Chapter 10

A Mouse's Cry

Barkas, Dot, and Terry returned to the inn they had rented and immediately fell right on their beds.

To them, it was an act that could only be considered natural. They'd spent several days subjugating orcs and chasing down an Aurel Rabbit before picking a fight with a group of newbies and ultimately drinking themselves all throughout the night. Another factor that contributed to their lack of energy was the fact that they'd actually captured the Aurel Rabbit. The joy that resulted from their success had pumped them full of adrenaline and stopped them from feeling their exhaustion.

The rush that had kept them going petered out the moment they got back to the inn. The sudden crash rendered them unable to resist their drowsiness any longer, and thus, they ended up passing out almost right on the spot. All three adventurers had long hit their limits, and thus slept soundly until some time in the afternoon.

Brakas, who'd gotten up with his body once again pumped full of energy, immediately visited one of his favourite bars upon waking in order to repeat the cycle all over; he'd already thrown yet another toast to his party's success. His group wasn't the only one drinking either. The bar was already filled with customers despite the fact that the sun was still high in the sky.

"We sure have gotten ourselves caught up in some trouble, haven't we Barkas-san?"

Dot spoke to Barkas as he raised a wooden mug and downed its cheap, beer-like contents.

"Huh? What're you talking about?"

"You know, the thing that with that one kid. Isn't our party already D ranked? Why should we be doing something as lame as going hunting goblins?"

Terry followed up Dot's statement and provided a bit more info as he used the tips of his fingers to grab a beer-friendly snack composed of meat and low grade vegetables.

“Pffft. Ahahahahahahaaaaah!”

“Was what I said really that weird?”

“Dunno, was it?”

Both Dot and Terry responded to Barkas’ laugh and taunt by raising their eyebrows in confusion.

“Sorry, my bad. Couldn’t help myself. I didn’t realize I forgot to tell you guys, could’ve sworn I did. This little event of ours won’t be even the slightest bit lame. In fact, it’ll earn us a hell of a lot more than just some Aurel Rabbit. We’ll probably be able to get ourselves a few gold coins out of it, in fact. Man, it’s been a long time since we’ve gotten a chance to earn this much of a payout.”

It didn’t take much for Barkas to convince both Dot and Terry. The little bit that was said had caused their faces to emulate his and warp into a pair of grins.

“You serious? Man, that sounds great. Looks like I’ll be eating well for quite some time. The orcs and aurel rabbit we got should pay out pretty well too. I think we’ll still have about half the payout after paying off all our tabs.”

Dot spoke happily as he considered the group’s debts.

“Gold? That’s perfect. I just so happened to have my eye on a certain magic item.”

“God damn Terry. Why the hell are you so obsessed with magic items? How about getting yourself a woman for once, huh?”

Terry reacted to the grin that accompanied Barkas’ comment by shrugging his shoulders.

“I just can’t really bring myself to really get in the mood with any women in the trade. Come on, you guys know what I’m into, right?”

“Yeah, yeah. You only like it when the woman doesn’t. I really don’t get you. Don’t they resist? How exactly does that make it more enjoyable?”

Dot voiced his knowledge of Terry’s preference in a bit of a questioning tone.

“That’s the good part, you see. Wait. What the hell, Dot. *You’re* questioning *my* tastes? Aren’t you a pervert yourself? You basically don’t show interest in anything but the nape of a woman’s neck.”

“I’d say the both of you are fucked. All that matters is that the woman lets you do her, come on.”

““You definitely have no right to say that when you can’t be satisfied till you totally break whoever it is you’re screwing.”“

Both Barkas’ companions responded to his slander in unison.

“Whoops. I must’ve let that one slip.”

The three men broke out into a series of vulgar laughs. However, none present judged them, for the only people that would bother visiting a bar and ordering cheap booze in the middle of the day were their kindred spirits.

Hence, their laughs merely ended up blending into the background, and their conversations drowned out by the noise around them. They were the only three to know what’d been said between them.

“So which brat are we going after? The stupid one that got himself involved with us, or the lanky one that calls himself a swordsman and has a slave?”

Dot asked Barkas about the two options as he contemplated them.

“The stupid one. Have you seen his staff? That thing’s got value. I mean, should be pretty obvious by now, but he’s definitely a noble of sorts. He’s definitely not his family’s first or second son either, seeing as how he hasn’t got an attendant or anything. It’s like he was given the staff to make up for that.”

Barkas’ conclusions were followed up by Terry.

“Oh yeah, I think he was going off and blabbing about himself too. Both his stupidity and haughty attitude make it pretty obvious that he’s gotta be a noble.”

“The kid with the slave looks like a good mark too. He seemed to speak fairly politely too. Plus, the fact that he’s got a slave at that age has to mean that he’s either some rich guy’s kid or a noble’s illegitimate son or something.”

“No need to bother with him, Dot. My money sense doesn’t react at all when I look at him. Still, would probably be better for us to off him just so there ain’t any witnesses. He’s probably at least got a bit of cash on him. Plus, I’d love to get myself a taste of that rabbitkin slave’s body.”

“I’m with you on that one. Do make sure you give me a go before you totally break her, Barkas-san.”

Dot’s expression warped into a perverted grin.

“At least let me go first. Their cries always sound best right off the bat.”

Terry, however, protested in an attempt to sate his fetish to its fullest.

All three men once again let loose a vulgar laugh. But again, the bar was far too noisy for anyone to bother listening in. Or rather, any human being.

“Chuu. Chu chu.”

A single mouse had happened to be sitting nearby, with its body blended into the shadows as it listened in on all they’d said.

On said mouse’s back was a unnatural pattern, a shape only engravable through the use of magic, a mark only known as the [Crest of Subordination].



“Yup. Looks like they’re scum through and through.”

Minnalis and I had gone into the forest in order to run a few preliminary checks. There, we decided that it’d be a good idea for us to keep an eye on Barkas and his companions. Hence, we had mouse relay to us what we wanted to know.

As one could assume, the mouse we put to use wasn’t just your everyday average mouse.

I’d used the [Magical Beast’s Egg Blade] in order to subordinate and train a Small Mouse, a rodent-like monster. Though the species’ members were technically classified as monsters, they weren’t really functionally different from their animal counterparts. They didn’t have any special abilities, nor were they thought of as

dangerous. In fact, they were often mistaken for regular mice, seeing as how they kind of basically were.

The [Magical Beast's Egg Blade] wasn't actually shaped the way you'd expect a sword to be shaped. The grip and sheath were both normal, but that was about it. The blade instead bore the shape of a budding flower. It allowed me to control any monsters whose stats, HP and MP aside, totalled to less than 1% of my own through the act of engraving upon them a Crest of Subordination. I could also store the monsters I took control of inside a mysterious space that lay within the blade by temporarily sacrificing 100 of my max MP. Likewise, I could increase the total number of monsters I was capable of controlling at once through the same action. Another feature that once again shared the same requirement granted me the ability to share senses with any of the monsters I had under my control.

Mouse #1 was originally just supposed to be a prototype. I'd only intended on using it to test my abilities, but I ultimately decided to keep it because it turned out to be useful than I'd been expecting. Much to my surprise, it was smart enough to understand human speech. Naturally, it lacked the vocal cords to reproduce any sort of human language, but the rodent was still capable of responding with a yes or no by making gestures. Its small size only added to how convenient it was to make use of, as I didn't need to store it in the [Magical Beast's Egg Blade]. That in turn meant I didn't actually have to have the sword out in order to have the mouse sortie. Another benefit to its size was that it was basically capable of squeezing in anywhere so long as the building wasn't completely sealed off, which meant I could effectively have eyes and ears everywhere I wanted.

Its current mission, observing Barkas, functioned as a bit of a test run that would allow me to determine how practical it was to use going forward.

"Is something the matter, Goshujin-sama?"

"I just got some info in from Mouse #1. Barkas' party was exactly what I'd been expecting it to be, a gathering of retarded douchebags."

"Can you let me listen in on them too?"

"Hmm, I dunno. The [Holy Blade of Vengeance] makes it so we're always connected through magic, so it should theoretically be possible. I don't recommend you do though, just hearing them'll be enough to annoy you."

I give my shoulders a light shrug as I answered. I'd been thinking that it'd be better for her not to listen in on them, but it seemed I was mistaken as my choice had led her to become rather displeased.

"Oh come on, Goshujin-sama, how could you say that? I know I'm your slave and all, but aren't we still supposed to be accomplices? I won't be unreasonable and ask you not to hide anything from me, but I will say that I don't need you to act all considerate of me. Do you know how frustrated I'd end up being if I found out that I didn't torture them enough, and that they deserved a fate even worse after we finish them off?"

"A-Alright, I get it. You're getting a little too close for comfort."

I did have to agree with Minnalis despite the fact that she'd invaded my personal space.

"Alright, here goes."

I successfully managed to connect Minnalis' auditory senses with the mouse's right as Barkas and his buddies started going off about their fantasies. I fundamentally viewed the stuff they were saying as the ramblings of a couple drunks, but they'd gone so far off the deep end that just hearing what they were saying made me want to murder them right here and now.

Minnalis remained silent as she listened to them, but the air behind her almost seemed haze up as she started to give off an incredible amount of pressure. I couldn't let her just stay like that, so I considered asking her if we could get back to surveying the forest.

My accomplice turned towards me and smiled a smile as pure as that of the Virgin Mary herself right as I considered cutting off the link between her and the mouse.

"Hey Goshujin-sama, you remember how you said you wanted to do an even split? You wouldn't mind changing that to a 6:4 cut, do you?"

"S-Sure..."

The manner in which Minnalis smiled simply rendered me unable to argue the matter any further.

Chapter 11

The Fate Of A Certain Boy

The next day, just like the previous day, I ate the breakfast that Minnalis had cooked, made preparations and we both left the inn.

There had been no need to wake up early today, so I'd gotten out of bed quite some time after the sun had risen, and by the time we left the inn, the city had already begun moving.

In that city, in which people from all regions of the kingdom gathered, many stores were open once the sun had climbed its way into the sky, and around noon, many people were conducting business – suspicious hawkers with unknown merchandise, novice merchants and people selling secondhand goods at a bargain.

This was a world without any precise clocks like those in Japan, so there were no methods of telling the time other than my biological clock and how high the sun was in the sky, but looking at the whole city, I found it mysterious how the number of open stores and the times they opened remained the same day after day.

Well, I didn't have a clock myself and was only making guesses, so I didn't know for sure, either.

The meeting place for today's competition was at the city's east gate.

It wasn't that far from the inn to the east gate, but even walking that short distance, we had to walk past many stalls. There were all kinds of things that did draw my interest, but today, I had to put them all off until later.

Without getting sidetracked, we headed for the meeting place that had been agreed upon.

"Hmm, we weren't the first to arrive," I said,

There was already a silhouette at the east gate as we approached it.

We were still quite some distance away, so it seemed that he hadn't noticed us, but I could see the boy from yesterday standing there by himself. It looked like he was talking to soldiers who were working gatekeepers of the east gate.

This was a world where brightly-colored hair that seemed to celebrate the existence of isekais was normal, but it was easy to spot the boy's vivid, golden hair among the crowd.

"Did you want us to be first to arrive?" Minnalis asked.

"Hmm? No, not really," I said. "It's just that I feel like we left quite early, and I hadn't thought that anyone would have left earlier. His enthusiasm is a bit, you know..."

Huh, come to think of it, I hadn't even learned his name. Well, I probably wouldn't see him after today, so it wouldn't matter if I thought of him as 'boy' until we parted.

"Well, whatever, it doesn't matter. Let's go," I said.

"Yes, Goshujin-sama."

Once we had closed some of the distance, the boy noticed us and approached us with a somewhat relieved look on his face.

"Good morning, aren't you late? I thought I'd gotten the meeting place wrong," he said.

"Late? No, I believe we have arrived quite early," said Minnalis.

She was right. Compared to most times that adventurers went out to hunt, now could be considered a little early. In fact, we hadn't decided on a time other than 'before noon,' so there was no such thing as early or late.

"What are you saying, it's much later than yesterday, isn't it? And don't speak to me so familiarly when you're just a slave. And judging from your appearance, you're a beast-person as well. Don't come too close to me; your beast stink will get on my clothes."

These angry words came smoothly from the boy's mouth.

He was scowling at Minnalis; he had separated the world into ranks as he had seen fit and was looking at her with contempt.

The countless eyes that looked at me after deciding that I was an enemy to the world.

The eyes of the villagers that had looked at Minnalis with contempt because she was a beast-person.

The exact same unpleasant feeling in the chest, these eyes that you could find anywhere.

At that point, this boy was already confirmed to be scum, but the scary thing was that he didn't stop there.

"That's right, more importantly, I was talking about today. Why did you go back early yesterday? Because of that, we couldn't train our coordination!" he said.

"I'm sorry?" I said.

What was he saying all of a sudden? I couldn't understand.

"Train our coordination. We can't just work as a party together without knowing each other's abilities," the boy said, wearing an expression as if to say, "Good grief."

The first thing I couldn't understand is why we had to work together as a party. What was this guy thinking? The inside of his head was even more of a field of flowers than I'd thought.

I was so dumbfounded and stayed silent, and the boy continued speaking, seeming to have made some kind of misunderstanding.

"Well, it's fine if you can just stick out as much as you can to draw the enemies' attention; as long as you hold them back so that they don't get to me, I'll finish them off for you with my magic. Ah, you, don't stick out too much, alright? I'm not very good at adjusting my spells' power, and unlike the slave, I'd feel sorry if you got caught up in them."

...So, what is he saying? That he wants to use us as a meat shield? This guy.

Not only that, but he wanted us to stick out and act as bait, and on top of that, he would use spells without caring if Minnalis got caught in them?

...I'd thought that my opinion on the boy had reached the lowest point, but then the

floor dropped further down.

It was a little surprising; I hadn't expected that I would think so lowly of this boy that I hadn't cared about at all.

“ ... ”

The expression vanished from Minnalis's face.

It was likely that she had activated her skill because she was unable to control her expression on her own any longer; sometimes it seems that she's over-reliant on this skill. Perhaps it was best if I warned her about it later.

Still, ah, maybe I should have asked the boy's name... No, maybe there was no reason to learn his name; it would immediately become meaningless information.

“It's alright to kill him,” I whispered to Minnalis.

“Are you alright with that?” she whispered back.

“Yeah, use poison so that he can't be identified, and make sure to take into account how long it takes to act, yeah? It seems that we won't have much time to enjoy it, so don't forget about that.”

The boy's attitude could be described as ordinary for a nobleman. He probably hadn't left home yet, and it's not like I couldn't understand his attitude of looking down on slaves and beast-people, but that didn't matter.

I had enough of thinking about what was right and what was wrong during my first time through this world. Morals and people's circumstances, I don't care about those. The important thing was what I thought.

And this boy had shown hostility and contempt towards my accomplice. Even if he hadn't done that, he'd said that he would injure Minnalis, despite knowing that she was my slave.

There wasn't any reason at all to hold myself back for a guy like this. So, Minnalis should do it if she wanted to. If she intended to drown herself in blood, I would stop her, but if she acted rationally, there was no need for me to restrain her murderous intent.

“I don’t mind if you have him to yourself. Most importantly, it wouldn’t be good for my mental health to quietly leave him alone after having my important accomplice made a fool of,” I whispered.

“Th-thank you, Goshujin-sama.”

As Minnalis pretended to be afraid of the boy’s harsh words and covered her face a little, I clearly saw her lips rise in a smile. She couldn’t conceal an emotion that surpassed the limits of the Audacity skill.

...Minnalis, seemed overjoyed at having been given permission to do this.

She was gradually staining her mana with her murderous intent.

“...So that’s how it is. Do you understand how amazing I am?” the boy said.

“Yes, that is amazing,” said Minnalis.

The boy was enjoying himself, engrossed in going on and on about the spells that he could cast while Minnalis prepared her own spell.

I’d suddenly lost interest completely, so his words went in one ear and out the other and I simply responded with, “Yes,” and, “That’s amazing.”

Minnalis and I had been whispering to each other while that was going on, but since Minnalis needed to focus on her spell now, it was convenient so I let him continue.

“Isn’t it? But my amazingness doesn’t end there. One day, there won’t be a single person in this kingdom, no, in any nation, who doesn’t know my name –”

“...Ice Particle Needle Poison,” Minnalis whispered finally, and her spell was complete.

Her deadly weapon, which was filled with murderous intent, ran through the air without anyone taking notice of it except for us.

“Hmm, what is this? Insects?” the boy said, his mouth that had been speaking as fast as if it had been lubricated finally stopping.

He put a hand on his neck, but there was no wound there. No, accurately speaking, there was a wound, but it was such a small one, as if an insect had stung him.

Ice Particle Needle Poison.

It was an original spell for mixing poison that Minnalis had invented, and as its name suggested, it froze poison and turned it into tiny needles.

A spell that added poison created by the Poison Demon of Phantom Flames to the ice created by a composition spell of the water and darkness elements, for which Minnalis possessed a relatively good affinity.

I'd suddenly thought of it while conversing with Minnalis during our journey from the royal capital, and together, we'd found time to develop this spell. It was difficult to control, but the amount of mana used for it was small; it was difficult to detect both visually and by its mana.

Once the tiny, ice-shaped needles pierced the target, they would immediately melt into poison and travel around the body. However, because the ice needles themselves weren't very hard and didn't have much force, even low-quality leather armor would repel them. Coupled with a quality specific to beast-people that allowed them to disperse their mana more easily, the situations this spell could be used were quite limited, so it didn't become the versatile spell that we'd thought it would be.

However, the advantage that made up for this was that it could poison the target without anyone noticing.

"Oh, look at this, haven't we gathered quite early today?" said Barkas as he and his trio showed up with immaculate timing. "Kukuku, is it because you felt like you couldn't make your senpais wait? You sure get it, don't you. Out of regard for this, I can forgive you if you pathetically rub your forehead against the ground and apologize, you know?" he said, grinning broadly.

It was an incredibly obvious provocation.

Seeing his eyes that were clouded over with a scum-like greed for the boy's staff and Minnalis, it was easy to see that Barkas had no intention of forgiving the boy.

However, the boy didn't notice this and was drawn in by this simple provocation, lashing out at Barkas out of temper.

"What did you say?! Who would do something as shameless as that?!" he shouted.

“I see. Then we should make a start,” Barkas said indifferently, lightly shrugging his shoulders.

“Yeah, I’m definitely going to make you guys cry!”

“Try it if you dare, but the important thing is to not be surrounded and killed by Goblins. Newly-registered adventurers acting brave and then getting killed by Goblins or something is quite a common story.”

“Hah, who’s going to be killed by a Goblin?”

“No, you can never tell, you know? In this business, nobody knows what the future holds. You could die at any moment,” Barkas said, suppressing his laughter

We showed our plates, the proof that we were adventurers, to the gate guard and passed through the east gate. We’d come into the city from the south, which was surrounded by a forest with the only clearing being just around the gate, but in contrast to that, there was a plain with a clear view, just outside the east gate.

To the northeast, I could see small mountains quite a long distance away, and a sparse forest went on endlessly from the foot of those mountains, as if trying to snuggle up to them. The plain was so wide that it would take three days to get to the mountains if we walked in a straight line.

Me, Minnalis, the boy and Barkas’s trio traveled to that sparse forest without much conversation occurring.

“Well then, the competition will last until today’s sunset. Return to the Guild before then, make your report and then wait there. If you don’t return to the Guild before the sun has finished setting, you’re out,” said Barkas.

“Yeah, I know. Come, let’s go! If you follow me, we won’t lose, AHAHAHA!”

Oh, it looks like the poison has circulated quite a bit, I thought.

The poison that Minnalis had used amplified itself by consuming the targets’ mana, so it would cause the target to enter a light state of MP intoxication before unleashing its direct effects. I supposed that it would be around an hour or two until he became unable to move.

The boy entered the forest with plenty of spirit, and Minnalis and I began walking behind him. We'd been planning to separate from the boy and tail Barkas and his friends, but in the end, it would have been too troublesome and everyone would have made too much noise if we said we'd go our own way, so we obediently followed him for now. We could just cast a light illusion and get away from him once we were in the forest; after all, he would be dead soon.

I glanced around surreptitiously to see Barkas's trio entering the forest from a different direction.

Their gaze was still directed towards us, so much plain greed in their eyes that it looked as if they would start licking their lips.



Later on, a corpse was discovered by an adventurer, decomposed so completely that it was impossible to tell whose corpse it was. Everything, from the leather armor to the area around the ground in contact with the body, had decomposed to mush, releasing a foul odor.

The only thing that had preserved its shape was the wooden stick in the corpse's hand that appeared to be a staff, but it had deteriorated so much that it would crumble if touched; it was impossible to determine what kind of staff it was.

Although a request was put up in the city of Ermia to investigate whether this was the doing of a new kind of monster, no similar corpses turned up afterwards, and the people forgot about it completely before long.

Chapter 12

Through An Onlooker's Looking Glass (1)

"Hey Dot! One of them's heading over to you."

A goblin dashed passed Barkas as he used his large two handed sword to slice another in half. The monster's target was Terry, the mage that functioned as the party's rear guard.

At first, it'd almost seemed as if the goblin would succeed in its assault, but it didn't. Dot reacted to Barkas' shout and managed to get in its way and fend it off before it could cause any harm.

"Your turn, Terry!"

Dot deflected the tree branch the goblin was using as a club and took a step back as he signaled one of his party's other members to attack.

"I'm on it already! Stones of ice, freeze my foe, [Ice Bullet]!"

Terry immediately followed up Dot's actions by firing off a series of ice-based projectiles at the goblin the moment the other man parted from it. As it was unable to avoid the attack, the goblin ended up croaking like a Frog before collapsing with a giant gaping hole in its chest. Naturally, Barkas hadn't just been sitting around. He contributed to his team's efforts by murdering a third goblin and thereby concluding the battle.

The three men then proceeded to cut off the goblins' ears and gather them all up. To adventurers, goblin ears were items of value, as they served to provide evidence of and function as a counter for one's kills.

Barkas' group had already been out hunting for quite some time, but the sun had already long passed its peak. As one could expect, they'd gotten quite the haul. In fact, the three goblins they just killed had pushed them right into the double digits.

"We've got a pretty good haul, more than I was expecting. Might as well take a break

and eat. Seems like it's 'bout time anyways."

"Whew. Finally."

"Man, Terry, you sure don't got any stamina. Sucks to be you, but we'll still have to keep on the move a bit longer. I scouted out a decent looking place a bit earlier in the day. S'just up ahead."

Dot smirked at Terry as he lead the rest of his party members towards the clearing he discovered earlier in the day.

Upon arriving, the party's members decided to just sit wherever. They grabbed their Lowest Grade Item Bag, and withdrew from it a few provisions: some black bread and several pieces of meat, both of which were of the dried variety.

"So why didn't we just kill them the moment they stepped foot in the forest anyways? I mean, we're just after the kid's staff, right?"

"What are you, stupid? Use that goddamned head of yours and just think. There's no harm in having them hunt a few goblins for us first. Two birds, one stone and all that, you know? Besides, we'd probably look real fishy if we didn't at least hunt ourselves a good few goblins, y'know?"

Barkas poured a bit of water out from his canteen and onto his bread while also biting down on a piece of dried meat.

"We'd best not go too far. We'll lose by default if we don't get back by the end of the day. Not like we need to wander off anyways, plenty of monsters round these parts."

"True. We have seen a good number of them."

Terry nodded as he spoke.

"You must not know of the fact that there used to be a village round the foot of the tall ass mountain over there, but it got taken over by a rogue demon a few years back. At least that's what people claimed when its residents tried to invade Erumia, the nearest town. Apparently what actually happened wazzat they'd been affected by some sort of curse and brainwashed. Shit caused them to totally lose their minds. They went berserk and attacked everything they saw. No one was able to figure out exactly how to fix 'em, so the villiagers just ended up getting exterminated instead. Their whole

settlement got wiped off the map. You'd think that's where the story would normally end, but there's more. There's also *that* rumour as well, you know, the one that's made it so that the only adventurers that ever come 'round these parts are the ones the guild decides to send by every once in a while? Yeah, *that* one. Thanks to all the flak, everyone pretty much stays the hell away. Makes it pretty damn easy to find monsters without really having to look around much."

Barkas recalled a few of the things he'd heard and reiterated them to his companions.

"I see... But what did you mean by *that* rumour?"

Terry tilted his head in an expression of confusion as he took another bite of meat.

"Come on Terry. You should start paying less attention to all the fancy magic items you like, and more to the stuff people around you say. Cause like, you know those villagers we were just talking about? Everyone says that their souls wander and haunt the forest we're in right now, and that running into one will get you one helluva curse. People've stopped coming here ever since."

Dot's explanation caused Terry to sigh.

"That's bullshit. I'd believe you if you said that their undead corpses wandered around, but their souls? Seriously man? That's gotta be bullshit."

"There's actually more to it than just the rumour. The only monsters that show up around these parts are goblins and green boars. There aren't any areas of interest, and the village being gone means that there's no actual point to hanging around much longer. An empty village isn't one that'll be hiring adventurers, y'know? The only reason you can find lots of monsters around is cause they're all low ranking ones, so it basically ain't good for anything other than newbies that're lookin' to gain experience. Even then, most don't bother since there's goblins and green boars in the forests near Erumia too."

Terry nodded, as if expressing his approval of to Barkas' logic.

"If anything, we should be glad they chose this of all places. Makes it way harder for people to figure out that we did them in."

"Isn't it about time for us to you know, do it now? I've eaten up more MP than expected cause we ended up fighting several times in a quick succession. Let's just kill 'em once

we've rested up. I want to see that slave girl cry already. We'll have to kill her after, so let's hurry it up already. I want me as fun time as possible."

Terry laughed as any douchebag would while imagining what was to come.

"We'll probably have to drag her off to some abandoned hunter's cabin or something after we kill the two men. Can't be getting busy when there's monsters around if we really wanna have fun."

"Don't be forgetting about the staff, you hear? It is technically what we're actually after, y'know?"

"“Yeah, yeah, we know.”“

"Well, least you guys know how to make it seem like you've got your priorities straight. I'm sure you already know, but, kill the kid with the staff first. Catch him off guard if you can. They're still fresh and inexperienced, so the rest of 'em will probably lose it the moment we get one of 'em. After that, get the lanky one. Crush his feet, make it so he can't use 'em. You can probably just leave him be if that works. No point killing him right there and then."

"Huh? Why not just kill him?"

"Man, Dot, you sure aren't good at using your head, are you?"

Terry gazed at Dot with what could only be described as a deliberate look of amazement.

"S'that supposed to be mean? I don't get it."

"“It means we're going to make him watch us rape that rabbitgirl, you moron!”“

A pair of synchronized laughs rang through the clearing as Dot's companions cackled to their hearts' content.

"Yeah, I really don't get you two. S'not something that turns me on, but whatever floats your boats."

"You know what'd be just perfect? What if she betrayed her master and begged for us to let her live? That'd just be the god damned best."

“Oh, oh. What about having her kill him? Imagine that.”

“I like it, but it might not be possible if he’s ordered her not to betray him.”

“Man, you guys sure are getting into this whole thing, not that I mind so long as you leave her nape unscathed.”

Dot did to Terry as Terry had done to him earlier and spoke in a bit of an exasperated tone whilst shrugging his shoulders. He remained silent thereafter because he’d added to the conversation all he intended to.

There was an inevitable bit of danger associated with not killing the lanky swordsman, but he was a fresh newbie that’d literally only just become an adventurer. Hence, all three figured that they need not be too careful so long as they killed the mage.

“Alright, sounds like a plan. Let’s finish eating so we can carry it out.”

Only then did Dot, the party’s scout, realize that something was amiss.

“Shit...!”

He raised his voice and desperately attempted to shout in order to warn his party of his sudden realization.

But he didn’t make it.

He didn’t manage to fulfill his duty as the team’s eyes and ears.

It’d been a pointless effort in the first place. He wouldn’t have been able to inform Terry or Barkas of the impending danger in time even if all three of them had been on high alert. That was just how fast it’d all happened. At first, Dot had thought that he’d only felt a gentle breeze, but his instincts immediately had alerted him that it was much more than just that.

A translucent, white smoke flooded their surroundings the moment the breeze passed by, and promptly dulled the men’s senses whilst depriving them of their ability to move; they collapsed and fell onto the forest’s undergrowth.

“We’ve... been hit with... a paralyzing... poison...”

(Shit! Shit!! Did we get jumped by Paramoths? Damn it! Why the hell would monsters like them be in a place like this!? Wait, were their scales even capable of working this quick...!?)

The strange mist that assaulted the three vanished as quickly as it'd appeared. It almost seemed to have dispersed itself into their surroundings immediately after effecting them.

"Shi... t... My body... won... t lis... ten... to... me..."

"This is bad, Barka... s... I can't... even lift... a finger..."

"Wait just a sec... I'll help... you guys up as soon... as I take an antidote..."

Dot and Terry were just flat out down and out, but Barkas was still capable of a certain degree of action. None of the three knew exactly why this happened to be the case, but they presumed it was either something to do with Barkas' superior stats or, more simply, his position at the time of the attack.

(God damn it! Come on Barkas. Move! Move...!)

The party's leader cursed as he pushed his body to its limits in an attempt to to move. It took quite some time, but he did to eventually manage to stretch his right arm all the way over to the bag he had at his waist. He couldn't help but feel frustrated and impatient; his hand felt like they were moving far too slowly. Even the act of grabbing the Potion of Detoxification he'd been looking for had taken ages in and of itself.

(Come on! Just a bit more!)

He slowly brought the potion up towards his face. The brute paid as much attention to his hands as he possibly could; he took extra care in order to ensure he didn't drop his precious lifeline.

"Al... right...!"

And then, after what felt like an eternity, he finally managed to bring the potion close enough to his face for it to actually be visible.

"Annnd cut. It's a real shame but that's all the time you've got."

“Guaaaaaaaahhhhh!!!”

A foot stomped itself on Barkas’ hand and crushed both it and the potion that it’d been holding.

It went without saying that the person that’d stepped on him was none other than myself.

I ground my foot into his hand as if to let out all the frustration I’d been building up. In doing so, I caused the bottle to shatter, and its fragments to pierce his flesh. Blood flowed from within his body and began seeping out of his many newly created cuts.

“So, tell me. How does it feel to suddenly have all your hopes crushed right before they’re realized?”

“Guuahhh... Argggghh!!”

“Right. I guess you are a little too preoccupied to answer.”

A few drops of the Potion of Detoxification managed to enter his bloodstream through the cuts on his hands, but it didn’t really matter. He take in enough of it to cure him of his paralysis. In fact, the little bit he did manage to absorb only served to harm him, as it woke up his nerves just enough for him to feel even more pain.

“How inconsiderate of you to steal a march on me and hog all the fun for yourself, Goshujin-sama.”

“Oh, whoops. My bad. These retards basically set me up perfectly, so I couldn’t really help myself.”

I lifted my foot off Barkas’ hand and shrugged my shoulders whilst speaking in a patronizing tone. Naturally, I made sure to stand right above him so he could better hear my snarky remark.

“I recognize... that... voice...”

His neck was stuck in its current position. He was unable to move, and therefore probably unable to see anything above our waistlines regardless of how hard he tried. However, as one would expect, he had yet to forget how our voices sounded, especially seeing as how he’d only just heard them a few hours back.

“What the... hell are... you bastards doing...? Guuuahhhh!!”

“Shut up already, trash. You’re hurting my ears.”

Minnalis stomped on Barkas’ right hand in a manner much more merciless than my own.

“I stopped and listened for one second, only to hear *that*? Care to repeat yourself? Who were you going to rape in front of who? Shut that mouth of yours, and stop violating everything around you with the garbage that comes out of it, you filthy cockroach.”

“Guh... Gahh... Argghghhhh!!”

The extent of Minnalis’ anger was made apparent by the fact that she continued to grind Barkas’ fist into the ground with her foot as she spoke; she put so much force into the assault that I could hear his bones crack each time she twisted her sole. And if that wasn’t enough, the expression on her face functioned to more than convince me that she was as irritated as could possibly be.

“And what’s more, you wanted me to betray Goshujin-sama and beg for my life? Just how mad do you plan to make me? Well?”

“T-That was ju—-arghh!”

Barkas tried to say something, but Minnalis decided not to give him a chance to speak, and instead kicked him in the jaw to shut him up.

She then immediately stomped on the man’s left hand, which had coincidentally ended up in her vicinity following her attack.

“I won’t let you bastards get away with this...!”

Barkas was still incapable of movement despite the fact that him bleeding had led to the bit of the potion he’d ingested earlier to start circulating through his bloodstream. He did, however, regain his ability to speak.

“Oh? So what exactly do you piggies think you can actually do to us?”

“Urgghhh! Stop that! God damiiiiiiiiitttt!!”

“Tell me, how’s your right hand feel? Does it hurt?”

“Stop! Just stop alright!! Guaaahhhhh!!”

Minnalis had moved from stepping on Barkas’ right hand to his left, so I took over the role and gave him a good stomp or two in order to milk a few extra screams out of him.

Only after a few laughs did I finally lift my foot and move on.

“Oh right, who was it that brought up having Minnalis kill me? Was it the third rate mage?”

“Thi... rd... ra... te...!?”

Terry, like Barkas, was incredibly easy to read, he responded to the scornful way in which I glanced in his direction with a sharp glare.

“Yeah. You’re nothing but third rate. In fact, I’m honestly quite surprised you’ve survived for as long as you have with how weak you are.”

“If... anything... argghghgh!”

Terry flipped onto his face after I kicked him in the exact manner Minnalis had kicked Barkas earlier.

“Hey, tell me how you feel. Are you vexed? Mortified? How does it feel to be rolling around face first like a caterpillar after all that shit talk? Well? Say something goddammit.”

I laughed as I approached him and ripped his staff out of his hands before snapping it right before his very eyes. He responded by sharpening his gaze even further, but I just ignored him and started kicking him while continuing to laugh and smile.

“Ple... ase... just... st... op... it... Al... ready...”

Terry was surprisingly easy to break. It didn’t take more than just a few kicks to make him cave.

Breaking him had made feel really refreshed, so I turned around in order to check on Minnalis, who turned out to be in the middle of breaking Dot.

“Wow, you sure are useless. Aren’t you supposed to be a scout? What’s the point of you even existing if you can’t do your job and warn your party about an upcoming threat? You’re useless in battle too. You let one of your party members finish the monster off instead of doing the job yourself. You’re useless, a good for nothing. Do you know what people like you are called? Leeches, parasites. Oh wait, sorry. That must’ve been too complicated for you. There’s no way someone as useless as you could even understand the concept of a parasite.”

“Kh... Stop... that...”

Minnalis giggled as she mercilessly kicked Dot over and over. The aura of irritation around hadn’t waned in the slightest despite the fact that she was repeating the action whilst wearing a smile.

Dot started off with a rebellious look in his eyes, but it soon vanished as he lost to his sense of pain.

The punishment Minnalis had administered was overly harsh, but honestly quite deserved, especially when one took the topic the men had just discussed into consideration. It had literally done nothing but serve to add more fuel to the fire.

“You guys were just talking about how you were going to kill us. That, of course, means you understand that the opposite might happen, right? So, given that, are you ready to die?”

I laced the aura of bloodlust I was giving off with magical energy in order to activate the [Magical Intimidation] skill. Its effects were immediately made apparent, as all three of their faces paled over in response. All three of the party’s members had still been looking down on us. They’d thought that they would’ve been able to kill us if they hadn’t been paralyzed ahead of time, but that thought was no more; my aura had obliterated it.

The only pillar of support they had remaining, all we still needed to break, was their shoddy sense of pride.

“W-We’re sorry! P-Please... don’t kill us...! Please!”

“No no no, we can’t be having you going there just yet.”

I interrupted Barkas and prevent him from saying another word.

“This is only just the opening act. We’re going to need a bit of data to reference for everything we do later on, so don’t be begging for your lives till after we’re done with the headliner. Ain’t that right, Minnalis?”

“Right it is, Goshujin-sama.”

Minnalis nodded as she activated her [Phantom Flame Poison Demon] in order to create a poison capable of reproducing an effect similar to that of the anesthetics we had back in my world. It was much more powerful than the paralyzing mist she’d just created, and had the strength to not only immobilize the three men, but also rob them off any senses they had from the neck down. They could still see, hear, and speak even under its influence, but that was all. In other words, the poison was exactly like an anesthetic, save for the fact that it didn’t deprive those it affected of their consciousness.

The fluid took floated above Minnalis’ hand following its synthesis. Its colouration was that of a marbled mix of red and orange. *Conveniently*, there just so happened to be exactly three servings worth of the stuff.

“I think it should be about time for us to get started. Would you mind lending me a hand in administering it, Goshujin-sama?”

“Sure.”

“W-What are you two d—gaaaaahh!”

I forced the men to open their mouths in order to allow Minnalis to pour the poison down each of their throats.

“It should kick in almost right away. It’s much stronger than the mist you inhaled earlier, so it should overwrite the other poison’s effects and allow you to talk again.”

The poison Minnalis had just created was extremely complex and ate up a lot of MP. As a result, she began suffering from Mana Intoxication, which in turn did the usual and made her start giving a more alluring air.

Her lips twisted up into a wide smile. It was a smile that was not only fearsome and dreadful, but also beautifully captivating.

“Kufufu. Please look forward to what’s to come. I’ll be giving you a glimpse of hell’s

very depths.”

Minnalis’ smile transformed and became even lovelier as she spoke. The impurities within it disappeared, leaving not but an expression of heartfelt joy.

Chapter 13

Through An Onlooker's Looking Glass (2)

"I guess I'd better start getting everything ready."

I decided to get on with the plan after confirming that Minnalis had gotten Barkas and his companions prepared for what was to come.

Two different Soul Blades were required for what I intended to do. The first was the [Magical Beast's Egg Blade,] and the second the [Water Sprite's Droplet Blade.]

Spare magical energy would always leak from my soul blades during the creation process if I wasn't careful enough in crafting them. Normally, that would be something that I'd try to prevent. This, however, wasn't exactly what one could call a normal situation. The overflow of energy was perfect for use in the creation of a scene that would instill an even greater amount of terror into the hearts of Barkas and his companions. Thus, I made sure to emphasize the mana leak, I purposefully formed the blade in a much more reckless manner than usual and caused black particles of light to scatter into my surroundings.

"Strum a tune sung by beasts, [Hellspawn Flower] "

The green, bud-like blade that extended from the sword's handle began to change as I slowly began channeling my magical energy through it. Veiny lines emerged from within the blade as it darkened into a series of purples and blacks. It pulsed and grew, expanding in all of size, malevolence and impurity. The change was dramatic, and caused Barkas' group to twitch in anxiety.

"W-What is that..."

"What, this? Oh, you know, just a little something. You'll find out in due time."

Rather than ignoring him, I replied in such a way that left in the dark. There was no fun in spoiling his future experiences ahead of time, especially given how well Minnalis' poison was working. It had done exactly as planned. The viscous, toxic liquid had completely overwritten its misty predecessor and totally paralyzed everything

but their faces. They were capable of speaking and moving their eyes, but they were otherwise unable to move even the slightest bit.

All three party members had no choice but to stare at the 『Magical Beast's Egg Blade』 as it continued to change. Their faces mirrored the blade; they began warping in fear and anxiety as I forced them to regard the process. Their hair started standing on end, all three had realized that the blade would ultimately cause harm.

I had purposefully slowed down the flow of my mana, so the blade had taken an extremely long time to reach its final form.

But it had.

The bud had finally blossomed.

[Jyaruuuuraa]

It began producing a sort of inorganic high pitched screech as it did.

““““Urgh!”““““

Barkas' group immediately grimaced as they heard it. The sound was awful, it sounded almost exactly like the reverberation of having someone scrape their nails against a blackboard. It was a bit harsh on the ears, but tolerable so long as it wasn't something that caught you off guard.

“Nghhh, I really don't like how that thing sounds.”

I knew what to expect, so I was relatively unaffected, but Minnalis' hearing was much more sensitive than mine, so it caused her a bit of grief.

“I already told you that I'm fine, Minnalis. You don't need to cover my ears.”

I'd told her to cover her own ears to minimize her exposure to the sound in order to reduce discomfort, a decision resulted from the fact that we weren't able to find any decent earplugs despite having gone around the entire town in search of them. It was something we both agreed on at the time, but she'd ended up ignoring it, as she was currently attached to my back and plugging mine instead.

“Ehehehe. Come on, Goshujin-sama. I'm your slave, so you have to make sure to order

me around at times like these if you want me to listen to you.”

“Come on, get off me already, and stop pressing your chest against me.”

“What’re you saying? What do you mean by crest?”

Minnalis was suffering from Mana Intoxication, so her actions seemed to have a certain degree of sexyness to them.

“Yeah, yeah, cut it out.”

“Awwww~ Can’t you reward me a bit? Look how much stuff I did.”

“Fine, but not right now. Come on, hurry up and just drink one of these.”

I peeled Minnalis off me and shoved an MP pot in her mouth in an ever so accustomed motion. I made sure to keep cool throughout by telling myself that she was only acting the way she was because she was under the influence. She seemed to be a bit further off the edge than usual, but I figured that it wasn’t an issue, and that she’d probably return to normal once a bit of time elapsed.

“W-What... the hell are they doing?”

“I-I don’t... get them...”

Terry and Dot expressed themselves in a pair of voices that contained both confusion and fear, a mix of emotions only fueled further by the fact that they didn’t understand us or the things that we seemed to be getting ready to do to them.

Barkas, on the other hand, didn’t really seem to mind my sword nor the banter Minnalis and I were exchanging. Instead, he was completely focused on the living thing that’d just so happened to appear right in his line of sight.

“So, how are you feeling, Slucky?” ^[1]

“Kyupiii!”

Slucky, the slime that appeared alongside the ear-piercing screech, responded with a cry so cute it seemed out of place. The Crest of Subordination engraved on its body allowed me to understand that it’d been attempting to convey that it was in perfect

form.

The blooming [Magical Beast's Egg Blade,] on the other hand, had withered and returned back to its usual bud-like state.

"Isn't that just a slime?"

Barkas questioned me in an overly confused manner.

"It is. It isn't a variant, nor a higher order subspecies. It's just your everyday average slime."

I responded to him with the truth. Slucky was the splitting image of your average slime. He didn't have any eyes or mouths; he was just a translucent, blue blob made out of a jelly-like substance. The only difference between Slucky and a "perfectly average" slime would be that Slucky was a slight bit smaller than average. He was only about the size of a small balance ball. He wasn't too small though, he was still within range for one to call him average. There was, of course, also the Crest of Subordination he had engraved onto him, but that was honestly all there was to it.

Slucky continued making his cute cries as he wiggled back and forth on the spot. Seeing him act like that once again made me ask a question that'd yet to be answered.

How the hell is it making those noises?

"I'm going to have to ask you do something a little bit on the more difficult size. You ready?"

"Kyupii kyuupi!"

I lightly pat Slucky over the head(?) after hearing him respond affirmatively. I was actually rather confused as to exactly where I'd been petting him, as I couldn't tell precisely where his head was located. All I knew for sure was that I'd petted him somewhere on the upper half of his body. Either way, the sensation I felt from doing so was one that reminded me of how it felt to press my hand against a cooled down piece of soft, springy dough.

I dispelled the [Magical Beast's Egg Blade] and instead summoned the [Water Sprite's Droplet Blade.] Unlike the former, the latter sword didn't have a blade at all. It was composed solely of three pieces, a handle, a diminutive swordguard, and a piece of

ultramarine cloth. The last of the three components was wrapped around the first.

“It’s all you, Slucky.”

“Kyuupiiii! Uuuu... kyu!”

Slucky responded as if ready before seemingly exerting himself and splitting into two.

I approached one of the two newly divided halves and pressed my sword against it. The corresponding portion of Slucky’s body was immediately reduced to a tenth its prior volume as it forged itself into a blade.

“W-What the hell are you doing?”

“You tell me. What do you think he’s doing?”

Minnalis, who was aware of what was to come, giggled as she teased Barkas with a smile.

“You’ll find out soon enough. Everything’s ready now, and it’ll be pretty hard for me to keep the sword’s blade in tact for an extent period of time given the amount of mana I have right now, so I won’t keep you waiting much longer.”

I walked over to Barkas and swung the newly formed blade as my lips twisted into a wide grin.

“W-wait... Please... h-hold...”

“Don’t worry. I won’t do as anything as boring as just killing you.”

I smiled briefly as I regarded Barkas’ decapitated, terror struck face before attacking his his two companions in much the same manner; I swung my blade in an arc and tore their heads off their bodies.



“Don’t worry. I won’t do as anything as boring as just killing you.”

The man whose face I was staring up at was one dyed in a sort of mad ecstasy. His smile only seemed to widen as he swung the sword that’d been lying around at the

edge of my sightline and beheaded me.

(Shit... Why'd I have to get done in by a brat like him...?)

I wasn't able to feel pain because of the stuff his slave had forced me to drink, but I could still tell that my severed head ended up rolling after it fell from my body.

I managed to remain conscious despite the fact that I'd lost my head. I could see, and saw both Terry and Dot ending up the same way I had.

I've heard that beheaded criminals would still open their mouths and blink for a few moments after their supposed deaths. Having now experienced it myself, I came to understand that it was the truth. But that too would soon come to end. That was just how things were. My consciousness would only remain for another few seconds at best. I would soon be taken into the darkness. With that in mind, I turned my eyes towards my companions, the men who had my back for the last few years, and watched as they too moved towards the light. The lack of pain made the last few moments I experienced almost seem surreal, but I sat put and awaited my death reg-

"W-What... What the hell is going on!?"

Time ticked by. One, two, three seconds passed, but my consciousness hadn't even began to fade.

I immediately began questioning whether or not I'd really been beheaded.

"T-The hell's going on!? Did I not actually get beheaded?"

"What's going on? Wasn't I supposed to have my head cut off?"

I heard both Dot and Terry voice their confusion in that order.

I moved my gaze as far as it would go, and examined their severed heads, only to realize that there was something attached to the bottom of their necks.

"Pftttt ahahaha! My bad, my bad. I guess it must be hard for you guys to see what's going on right now, huh?"

The brat that'd beheaded us laughed loudly before approaching me. I felt the sensation of something pulling on my hair a few moments after his feet stopped right before my

eyes.

“W-What the hell!? Th-th-the fuck’s going on!?”

I was hoisted into the air and given a better view of what had happened to me. More specifically, I was given a better view of my own body, twitching, convulsing, and spewing blood as it lay on the ground.

“Y-Y-You have to be fucking kidding me! The hell is going on!? Why aren’t I dead!? Isn’t that my body right there!?”

“Hahaha. Amazing isn’t it? We had Slucky attach a part of himself to each of your necks right when we cut them off. He keeps your blood flowing, at the right pressure, and full of oxygen so you can stay conscious and not dead, even without the rest of your body. He also serves as a substitute for your vocal chords, so you can speak all you like. Minnalis’ poison is keeping you paralyzed and free of pain, so you won’t die from shock either.”

“Haaah!? The hell are you saying? Stop saying shit I don’t understand!”

“All it means is that you can remain conscious even as just a head. Here, you’ll understand if you just get a good look.”

The brat shrugged in an overly exaggerated manner before putting me on top of the rock I’d just been sitting on. He somehow made his sword disappear before violently grabbing both Terry and Dot and holding them right in front of me. The two had rather spaced out expressions. It didn’t take me long to realize that I probably looked the same. I could see a slime-like thing wrapped around the bottom of each of their severed heads. A dark red liquid, their blood, moved around within it as it pulsed in a pump-like manner.

Knowing that the exact same thing had happened to me made me almost want to keel over and faint. It was almost as if I’d been remodeled into some sort of inhuman freak.

“So you understand what’s happened to you now? Isn’t this just great? Not very many people get to die while experiencing something *this* interesting, you know?”

The monster of a brat continued to smile as placed Terry and Dot beside me while getting ready to toy with our very lives themselves.

“Slucky.”

“Kyupii!”

The slime cried in response as if to affirm the man’s words before slowly crawling towards us.

“O-Oi... What are you planning?”

The negative emotion swelling up within me led me to repeat the question I had asked earlier.

I wasn’t given an answer. My captor instead turned to the slime and spoke to it in a soft tone while stroking its head, a smile decorating his face the whole way through.

“Feel free to dig in.”

“Kyupii!!”

“...STTTTOOOOOPPPPPPPPPPPPP THAAAAATTTTTTTTT!!!!!!!”

The slime immediately kicked into action and began leaning its body on top of us in response to the brat’s words. The way it acted almost made it seem as if it’d been waiting for his signal the whole damned time.

“Whaaaaa!? Stop thaaat! Our bodies! Our bodies!!”

Our bodies started to make crunching sounds as the slime compressed them within itself.

“P-Please stop that!! Those are *our* bodies! Stop that right now! Stop messing with them! Who the hell do you think we are damn it!? Stop it! Stop it now!”

Terry began screaming at the top of his lungs the moment he saw the slime begin to consume his body.

“T-The hell is this!? No! I know, it’s a dream! Yeah, it has to be a dream! Gyahahahaha! I get it! This was all just a dream this whole time!”

Dot’s words were convincing. This just had to be a dream, a god awful nightmare.

“Heh heh heh. Well, what do you think? Isn’t watching a slime eat you while you’re still perfectly conscious just novel?”

The rabbitkin’s description of the event was spot on. The slime was translucent, so we could see inside of its body; we could see exactly what was going on within it, and we could even hear the occasional crunch through the slimy blob. We heard a particularly loud crack as the slime crushed Dot’s arm and folded Terry’s twisted legs in half. It then peeled off my leather armour, tore my stomach in half, and put my internals on display. I heard something important in my mind every single time a piece of one of our bodies lost its original form.

“This can’t be real. This isn’t possible. This can’t be happening. This can’t be happening. This can’t be happening. This can’t be happening. This can’t be happening. This can’t be happening.”

“Arghhh! This was all our fault! I’m sorry, we’re sorry! Please, just stop already!”

Dot was the first to break, with Terry following soon after. The former began quietly muttering “this can’t be happening,” over and over while the latter began begging for it to stop. I, on the other hand, began letting out dry gasps. The fact that I saw my own body get broken down and consumed right in front of me made me feel like I was going mad.

I knew that I was going to die. That, I understood. But the way I was going to die wasn’t something I could bring myself to accept. I didn’t want it to end, not like this.

“Hmmm... You guys are boring. You’ve all given up despite not even having felt any pain.”

“We’ve even had goblins entertain us more than them.”

“Right?”

We were no longer able to discern which part of the lump of flesh inside the slime belonged to who.

I wasn’t able to get what was going on anymore. My mind wasn’t able to keep up.

Why? Why...? Why!?

I wasn’t able to comprehend why the two people in front of us were smiling anymore. Why were they smiling and happily chatting away despite the fact that *that* had

happened to me?

“Kyupuu!”

The slime that’d consumed us spat a lump of metal, our equips, back outside of it after it was done ingesting and processing our bodies.

“What did we do to deserve this!?”

“Huh? The hell do you mean by that?”

The brat’s words will filled with a burning, violent rage. To him, the answer was clearly an obvious one, but I couldn’t think of any prior events that would’ve led to me incurring his wrath.

“Weren’t you trying to backstab me? Didn’t you want to rape Minnalis right before my eyes? Hadn’t you planned on murdering me?”

“Y-Yeah, but that doesn’t justify something *this* horrible!”

“What do you mean “justify,” low-life? Didn’t you think you could get away with whatever the hell you wanted just because you were stronger than someone? Didn’t you think no one would care so long as you weren’t found out? Doesn’t all this just go along with that same school of thought? We’re doing as we like because we’re stronger than you, and because no one will know what happened. Shouldn’t we be perfectly justified based on your very own logic?”

“...”

“Don’t get all pretentious on us. Don’t be complaining about what we’re doing to you. You deserve this. As scum, you should die like scum.”

Their words made me recall something the local priest had preached to me back when I was a child.

I guess this is what he meant by Karma. Someone did onto us what we did onto others.

I understood that.

But I still couldn’t it accept it.

“No...! No, no, no, no, no!!!”

I don't want to die. I don't. Want to die. I. Don't. Want. To. Die.

Not like this.

I'd long abandoned even the consideration of a natural death. It was something I threw away the moment I became an adventurer. But I couldn't stand going out like this.

I didn't want it to end like this.

Not like this.

“It seems like it's about time for us to bid our farewells. Minnalis, Slucky, we all get one each. Alright?”

“Sure thing, Goshujin-sama.”

The rabbitkin reached into an item bag-like object and pulled out a rusty hammer as she spoke.

“This is alllllllll juuuuuuuust aaaaaaa dreeeeeammmmmmmmmm! IIIIII'mmmmmm juuuuuuuusssssssstttttt drrrreeeeeeeeaaaaaaamiiiiiiingggggg!! Bye bygrophph!”

The sound of something whistling in the wind passed by my ears as she smashed the hammer into the spot right next to me. Dot's still warm blood flew through the air and splashed itself onto my face as I felt a vibration shake through the thing I was situated on top of.

“Alright, your turn Slucky.”

“Kyupii!”

The slime extended a pair of tentacles as it responded to the brat's instructions.

“This can't be happening! There's just no way! This is way too unreal! It's impoasdugagi!”

The slime pulled Terry's head into its body and crushed both his bones and flesh into a single small lump. One of his eyeballs flew out of the slime's body after the rest was consumed, as if it was something accidentally spilled in the act of eating. But not even

that part managed to escape, as one of the slime's tentacles reached out, grabbed it, and pulled it back into the meat grinder that was its body.

"No! Not like this! Why... Why does it have to be like this!?"

"That's a thought I've entertained quite a few times as well. I've caught myself screaming that exact question over and over. You see, you guys might not know the reason why this happened, but I do. And I'm pretty sure I've already explained it, haven't I?"



The last thing I saw right before getting my head split in half was the sight of the brat's bitter smile, one that contained within it scorn even for oneself.

[1] Original name is a Dragon Quest reference. Idk how they localized it, so I just did it my way. (Surakichi = Slime lucky = Slucky)

Chapter 14

The Hero And The Little Red Oni

Slucky had already finished all his duties by devouring Barkas' bisected head, so I put him away for the time being.

Though the [[Magical Beast's Egg Blade]] made a ton of noise when ejecting monsters, it was surprisingly quiet when doing the opposite; its petals silently enveloped the slime much in the same manner as would a carnivorous plant's.

But then it happened; we were attacked.

"Minnalis!"

"!?"

11 different projectiles suddenly flew towards us.

(Can I even make it in time!?)

Our attackers had caught us completely off guard and seized the initiative

I immediately focused on the battle at hand and kicked myself into gear. My sharpened senses allowed me to determine that the objects flying towards us were throwing spears. Their tips were coated with a strange purple liquid, one I could only presume to be poison. 7 of the 11 were aimed at Minnalis, and the remaining 4 at me.

Minnalis managed to react to the attack, but would only be able to defend herself at best. She normally might have been able to do more than just that, but that was because the swords she usually practiced with were much easier to handle than the blunt weapon she'd used to crush Dot's head.

The number of goblin-like creations in our vicinity totalled to 16. The 5 that hadn't thrown their spears had quickly charged towards us to follow up their companions' ranged attacks.

I was able to take in all that information in an instant, but just taking it in was by no means equivalent to processing or reacting to it. It was an issue that resulted from me retaining my processing speed, but no longer having a body with the specs to match it. The discrepancy forced me to realize that I wouldn't be able to get away with holding back.

There were only 16 of them. I wouldn't need to worry about being able to fight for a longer, sustained period of time.

Knowing that, I swiftly formed the 『Soulblade of Origin』 in my right hand, and the 『Holy Sword of Vengeance』 in my left while pouring as much mana as I could into all four of my limbs and surroundings. The former was for power, whereas the latter allowed me to get a better grasp of what was going on around me.

I undid the subconscious limiter that my brain placed on my body and kicked off at my absolute maximum speed while ignoring the fact that my muscles almost seemed to creak under the strain.

It all happened in an instant; the actions I pulled off and decisions I made ate up a cumulative span of less than a second. The feat was one that demonstrated the fact that I truly deserved the title that claimed that I'd reached the Zenith of Technical Mastery, and that the fancy SSS I had decorating my status plate wasn't just for show. As far as finesse went, I was literally the best of the best.

(It looks like she'll be able to ward off the 2 coming straight at her. I should focus my efforts on handling the other 9 instead.)

The combination of the Haste skill and my magically reinforced legs allowed me to accelerate at a rate faster than my agility stat otherwise allowed.

I ignored the spears aimed towards me. They were accurately thrown so that they would've been unavoidable under any sort of normal circumstances. In other words, I didn't need to mind them. The speed at which I moved immediately disqualified them from from doing any harm.

(Well, that's four less I have to deal with.)

I wasn't capable of maintaining my acceleration for anything beyond a fraction of a second. I'd snap my own limbs if I accidentally exerted too much force.

I cut up the three closest spears with the [Holy Sword of Vengeance] deflecting the final one moving towards her right hand side by hitting it right on the tip with the [Soulblade of Origin.]

(Just three more.)

The spear I deflected spun out and collided with the remaining spears and caused a series of chain reactions that caused them to lose the forces that propelled them.

My timing had been perfect; I managed to turn all incoming projectiles into nonfactors right as the five monsters that'd been rushing us leapt out of the bushes and revealed themselves.

(Perfect. Looks like they're Red Caps.)

Red Caps were a relatively small breed of goblin. They were known for two things. The first was the fact that their heads were red, and seemed to resemble hats. Apparently, this wasn't an inborn trait, but rather one that resulted from the creatures rubbing their prey's blood all over their skulls immediately following a successful hunt. The goblin subspecies' second defining feature was that its members were good at coordinating with one another.

I span around on one foot and turned towards the two that'd appeared around Minnalis back right side and accelerated once more.

"Gah!"

"Gi!"

I let go of both my swords and grabbed the approaching goblins by their red, hat-like heads before using Sky Step to jump just shy of two meters into the air. I then whipped both Redcaps towards Minnalis' left and caused them to be impaled upon their comrades' spears, an act that immediately caused said comrades to stop in their tracks.

14 enemies remained; 11 were still in hiding, 1 was right by me, and 2 were frozen in place by Minnalis.

The two blades I let go of just a second earlier basically hadn't moved, so I once again grabbed both and moved towards the Red Cap that happened to be right by me.

(Tsk. I'm only barely able to keep this up even though I've been keeping myself as under control as possible.)

My body was screaming despite only having been pushed to its limits for less than 5 seconds. I was walking a thin line, a tightrope, as outputting even the slightest bit more power could potentially lead to self-harm.

I wouldn't have had to resort to this had I any more mana. I would've been able to pull out what one could actually call a trump card. But I couldn't. Toying around with Barkas' group had eaten up too much magical energy, so I instead ended up with a cheap knock off. I would've lost the ability to move had I not done a series of fine adjustments on the fly. Naturally, my method wasn't perfect, so a dull pain had began coursing through my body as recompense.

It looked like tomorrow would be a day in which I suffered from muscle pains.

I was in a bad mood. These goblins had just happened to come along right when I was about to bask in the afterglow of a job well done.

I formed a cross with my blades as I slashed the red cap in order to vent my frustrations.

"Goshujin-sama!"

"Get rid of the two you see over there. I'll take care of the ones still in hiding."

The two Red Caps that Minnalis had by her had already failed their ambush, so I saw no reason for her to not be able to handle them now that it had come down to a head on fight. Thus, I dove into the forest without awaiting her answer.

None of the 11 remaining Red Caps had yet to move, they were still in their original positions as they had yet to figure out how to cope with the status quo.

I dispelled the 『Holy Sword of Vengeance』 and used my now free right hand to pull a pair of throwing knives out from within the Round Squirrel Pouch and promptly threw both at the two goblins to my right.

Several trees stood between the Red caps and I, so I wasn't able to aim at their vitals. However, I did still manage to give both relatively deep injuries, as the knives stabbed one in the arm and the other in the leg.

“Gyaruaaaa!?”

“Gyuruuu!?”

The fast acting poison Minnalis had applied to the knives ahead of time caused both to scream in pain; they were doomed to die some time within the next 10 minutes, even if I simply left them be.

I threw the 『Soulblade of Origin』 straight into another one’s heart and listened to its death throes before putting it away and pulling out another set of Soulblades. 『Flame Spider’s Leg Blade』 was good in close combat, so I took it in my right and the 『Emerald Crystal Blade』 in my left.

I span in a counterclockwise direction and weaved through the trees in order to slaughter all remaining Red Caps. They were incapable of resisting me; I slit their throats, gouged their necks from behind, dug their brains out from within their eye sockets, and smashed their heads by slamming them into nearby tree trunks.

I swapped the 『Emerald Crystal Blade』 back out for the 『Soulblade of Origin』 and used it to overkill the Red Caps that tried to pull a fast one on me by hiding themselves within the bushes, cut most the remaining ones down, and even finally skewered the one trying to use its allies as meatshields as it attempted to escape.

“It looks like you’re the last.”

“Gyaruaaaaaa!”

“Shut up.”

The last came at me suicidally, but I easily split it in half and brought an end to the Red Cap’s assault as a whole.

◇ ◇ ◇

“Argghh, my arms hurt. I’m tired and sleepy. I don’t wanna move. I wanna go home. I wanna dive into my bed and roll around in it.”

I voiced my body’s desires and threw a bit of a tantrum.

I was still in a good mood because of what we did to Barkas and his companions. My

flesh and blood body, however, failed to reflect my emotional status. It was in all sorts of pain as a result of me pushing myself harder than need be. I was also intoxicated as a result of using too much mana at once, and thus, I was unable to think with as much reason as I otherwise could've. I'd already drank an MP potion in order to restore my cognitive abilities, but it had yet to kick in.

"Why didn't I realize that I could've just stopped going full throttle the moment I knocked all their spears away?"

Tomorrow was going to be a bad day. My muscles were going to ache, and both my joints and bones were going to be groaning in agony all day. I was completely exhausted despite only having exerted myself for a few seconds.

I mean, I went all out and stuff, but I hadn't been serious, which in turn meant that it was possible for this pain of mine to get even worse than it was right now.

"Ugh, we should stop by a pharmacy and pick up some pain killers. Er, wait, I should be able to heal myself with the [Emerald Heartblade] once I get a bit more of my MP back. Man, it looks like MP's going to be one of the things that holds me back the most. I should get the Meditation skill as soon as possible. It'll he- wait."

(Aw crap. It looks like I started talking to myself again. That's a habit I really need to shake.)

I shook my head; I couldn't believe myself. I'd already slipped up and started talking to myself again even though it'd only been a few days since Minnalis had warned me about me having a bad habit of going off and monologuing.

(I guess I better grab what I need to prove that we killed these Red Caps... Ugh... I really don't want to. There's like 16 of them. Bringing all these back would make us *really* stand out.)

Red Caps were pretty weak by themselves, but there was no way for a pair of brand new adventurers to defeat 16 of them. That was just way the hell out of scope.

We'd probably be able to bring back two or three without issue, as all that would do is cause people to assume that we happened to have trained ourselves up a bit before becoming adventurers. It wouldn't make them suspect us to be anything more than just people with potential.

(Plus, it wasn't like we were in any sort of financial distress. We had all the money we needed, the extra bit we'd get from the guild by showing them that we defeated a group of Red Caps this big wouldn't be worth the attention we'd get. And if Minnalis asks, I'll just insist that I didn't just not want to bother.)

Minnalis had all the money management skills of a Japanese housewife, so I purposefully thought up an excuse that'd work to convince her. I even considered that she might tell me I could've just picked them up and saved them for later, and came up an excuse for that scenario too. Specifically, I decided I'd tell her that I just hadn't thought of doing so at the time.

With that in mind, I grabbed the two nearest Red Caps and retrieved the body parts that'd allowed me to prove I killed them before heading back in Minnalis' direction.

"Huh?"

"..."

I saw strange sight upon my return to clearing Minnalis was situated in.

"Hey Minnalis, what exactly are you doing?"

Minnalis was, for some odd reason, sitting in seiza right in the clearing's centre. The Red Caps she and I defeated lay nearby, but she was paying them no mind. It looked like she'd managed to handle the last two by effectively shredding their flesh to bits.

Her rabbit ears, which normally swayed to and fro, had instead fallen flat on her head.

I couldn't exactly what she was saying to herself, but I managed to catch the word "behind" among a few others. She seemed to be feeling a bit under the weather.

"N-Nothing important, just reflecting on the fact that I accidentally let us get attacked despite being responsible for keeping watch over our surroundings because I was having a bit too much fun..."

"Oh, right, that. That sounds like a huge pain, so save it for when we get back to the inn. I just want to dive right into bed right about now."

"Y-You're not going to scold me?"

“Why would I? I only just barely noticed them so I’m just as responsible as you are. I’ll be doing a bit of reflection myself later.”

“You’re not going to throw me away? Are you really going to let me stay as both your slave and accomplice, Goshujin-sama?”

“Huh? Why are you even considering that? Sure you messed up, but your mishap wasn’t bad enough to cause any real damage. Besides, I was already aware that you weren’t already skilled going into this whole accomplice thing, and decided to go through with it anyway, so I’m not going to throw you away because of a small mistake or two — not that the Holy Sword of Vengeance would allow me to do so in the first place.”

To be honest, Minnalis looked like she’d wanted me to scold her, but I couldn’t be bothered because I was way too exhausted, so I decided to just shelve the idea for the time being.

“You know, I think that the lack of MP is just getting to you in a different way than usual. Here, have another potion.”

“*Drinking sounds*”

I shoved an MP potion in Minnalis’ mouth. The action was a bit too sudden, and caught her completely off guard. The combination of her moistened eyes and the blue liquid leaking out the side of her mouth made her look a bit erotic. That in itself was something that normally would’ve gotten my heart pounding, but I was currently too tired to bother.

As the moment, I wanted nothing more than to find myself a futon to crawl into. However, I was unable to entertain the thought as I realized that I couldn’t just fall asleep in the middle of the forest of all places, so I decided to just force Minnalis back to the inn.

“Alright, get up. Let’s start heading back.”

“Oh, alright.”

And so, we finally got a move on.

“I know we planned otherwise, but let’s just tell the guild that we ended up getting

seperated from that one noble kid that was supposed to be with us because we weren't able to maintain full control over a combat situation or something."

The original plan was for us to spray his surroundings with a poison that wouldn't harm him, but would keep monsters away while also having him hallucinate in a state of unconsciousness so we could go and pick him up later. However, he'd pissed us off, and so, we'd gone and done something else instead. As of right now, I'd say he was currently probably off rotting somewhere with his body half liquified. I was pretty confident in the poison we had him ingest, as it was one that would feel on his mana in order to fuel a process that would eat away at his body and cause it to decompose.

"Right..."

"Oh come on, cheer up. We've still got things to do and places to be. We're only going to be getting busier from here on out, so sharpen up."

"Ah! Wha! Okay!"

I pat Minnalis on the head in an attempt to convince her to switch up her thoughts and direct her focus elsewhere.

"You don't have the time to be feeling down about a mistake this minor. Barkas and his clowns only served to function as the opening act, and we've finally got our first main dish coming up ahead."

I wasn't sure if it was because I was still under the influence, or simply tired, but I wasn't able to maintain full control over my own emotions.

The smile I'd been holding back finally showed itself on my face.

"Just imagining it is getting my blood pumped despite my exhaustion. I'd thought that killing Barkas would at least curb my appetite, but it wasn't nearly enough."

"..."

My eyes narrowed as my lips curved themselves upwards.

"I've been pretty high strung ever since we got here. I don't mind you feeling down or wanting to reflect on your mistakes, but I want you to switch gears as quickly as you can. Isn't getting stuck thinking yourself in circles just a waste of an opportunity? We

might as well spend all our time thinking about how we can best get revenge on Yuumis while we're here. Save all that self reflection for when we're done."



"And... I think that just about sums it up."

We reported in to the guild not too long after arriving back in Elmia.

We told the buffed up, male receptionist that we were ambushed by a pair of Red Caps right around when the mage excused himself to "do his business," and that we only managed to survive the ordeal because we heard the mage scream. His surprised shout had allowed us to take up arms and defeat the Red Caps as they attempted to ambush us. We also stated that we immediately retreated because we didn't think it was safe for us to stay in the vicinity much longer.

"We heard the mage scream again right around when we were finishing up, so I don't think he made it..."

"I see... Though it is rather unfortunate that you couldn't help him, I do think you two made the right choice. Red Caps specialize in grouping up and planning ambushes, you may have lost your lives had you tried to save him."

Naturally, we hadn't said a word about Barkas or his crew.

"Are you really sure that you encountered a group of Red Caps that close to the forest's edge though...?"

"We're sure. I think this should work as proof that we beat them, right?"

I placed the body parts that served as proof of subjugation on the counter alongside several proofs from some of the goblin we'd defeated.

The receptionist examined all the proofs with a serious look on his face.

"It looks like you were right. This really is a piece off a Redcap's head. Most Redcaps tend to stay around the base of the mountain, but smaller groups of 4-5 have been spotted near the forest's entrance before."

"Oh, okay."

(Huh...? I'm pretty sure what we ran into wasn't exactly what you'd be able to call a small group.)

After all, we'd encountered a whole 16 of them.

Monsters were known to occasionally stray from the forest from time to time, but, the ones we ran into didn't really seem like lost strays that happened to wander outside their usual territory.

(Oh, right. Didn't the demons start attacking coming and attacking people my first time through too? I could swear it happened right before Elmia got slammed by that massive army of undead.)

I recalled the time I visited Elmia prior to getting reset and remembered that I'd actually saved the city from a large group of the undead.

The reason that attack occurred was because of a demon gone rogue. It brainwashed a group of villagers and forced the local army to annihilate them. The mass killing had caused a buildup of negative magical energy, which unbeknownst to Elmia's citizens, began taking over the corpses of monsters. These possessed monsters killed their still living counterparts, which bolstered their numbers. Having the cycle repeat itself over and over ultimately gave rise to an army.

I happened to recall that village in particular because it'd served as one of the places I hid in after having the world turned against me. The state it was in was nothing short of terrible. The land was stained with negative emotions and magical energy. It had degraded to such an extent that all that remained of its agricultural were a few, delicate purple and yellow flowers blooming amongst the rubble that made up the village's remains.

(Back then, we were able to completely plow through all the undead because I was there alongside Yuumis, that bitch of a princess, Kars, the head knight, and a party of A ranked adventurers. I wonder how things'll turn out this time around...)

That said, the undead army wouldn't be attacking for another two months.

There also wasn't any guarantee that Elmia would even last that long, as they were slated to be attacked not once but twice. In 10 days time, the city would be attacked by horde of Goblins, Red Caps, and boars. It would have to survive that onslaught if it even wished to consider the possibility of surviving the undead invasion. The only

reason the city managed to survive the first of the two onslaughts the first time around was because there had, once again, just so happened to be an A ranked party in town.

Surviving the onslaught was what convinced the city to send people to scout the forest, which in turn provided them enough information to prepare themselves for the undead invasion to come. That is, they only discovered the impending danger because they had ordered investigations in the first incident's aftermath. The Red Cap group Minnalis and I encountered was actually most likely an early sign of the chaos to come.

The receptionist finished checking over all the details he needed to and traded our proofs for cash as I got myself lost in thought.

"There won't be any added bonuses for the Redcaps because they haven't been designated for subjugation. You'll only be getting the standard fee. The goblins, however, are, so you'll be getting paid extra for those."

We were given a bunch of coins.

"You two must be as skilled as most E ranked adventurers if you were able to remain unscathed despite encountering two Red Caps. The number may not sound impressive, but it really is. We'll be able to raise your ranks if you just complete a few more requests for us, so keep it up, alright?"

"Sure thing, will do."

"Oh and, one more thing. Barkas, Dot, and Terry may be a full fledged D ranked party, but they aren't what we would call known for being well behaved. It'd be best for you to avoid getting involved with them if you can. We're aware that you made a bet with them, but it should no longer count as valid given the circumstances. I suggest you just head on home and let us handle the aftermath."

"We'd really appreciate that. Thanks."

I responded to the guild's receptionist in a rather grim tone of voice.

Minnalis and I both then politely thanked the buff, veteran adventurer before turning around and leaving.

Chapter 15

Minnalis: Raising Flags

“Here’s your reward. Oh and congratulations. You and your party have now both been promoted to rank E.”

“Thank you.”

Ten days have passed since we murdered Barkas and his companions. I was currently out on an errand on Goshujin-sama’s behalf. Specifically, he ordered me to do random requests that seemed befitting of our rank so we could have it raised.

Today’s prey were hairy monsters known as Lesser Apes. I’d just finished hunting them, and was currently on my way back home.

“So how has Kaito been doing lately? I heard that he was injured and is currently resting at an inn.”

“He’s doing well. His wounds have been healing slowly but steadily.”

I smiled as I cheerfully replied to the hideous pig of a receptionist standing in front of me in. She, being someone incapable of reading the mood, had tried batting her eyelashes at Goshujin-sama when she first saw him. Lately, however, it she seemed to have had a change of heart, as she had finally began dealing with him as she would any other client. The reason for her sudden change was because she started seeing a different male adventurer. Her affections for him were obvious, as she would always go out of her way to give him extra information. The two really did seem to suit each other, seeing as how they were both pigs.

The first thing I did after leaving the guild was shopping for ingredients. In a sense, it was a task that required even more focus than taking down monsters. What I bought was what Goshujin-sama would be putting in his mouth, so I made sure I pulled all the stops and only chose the highest quality goods I could.

“Hey Minnalis. Nice to you see again. Let me guess, you’re out on another shopping errand?”

“Yup. Could I get... this, that, and that over there? Preferably for five copper pieces off.”

Though I did splurge in the sense that I would buy more expensive goods, I still did try to cut our expenses down as much as possible. I'd always haggle, and would only buy things that were within a reasonable price range. I'd never get anything *too* expensive.

“Well... you did make a few purchases yesterday too, so how about a three copper discount?”

“Please and thank you.”

I pulled my purse out from within the Round Squirrel Pouch and handed the vendor the money I owed him. The vegetables I bought were pretty high quality. This town was much bigger than all the others we passed on our way to it. Here, more luxurious goods were quite a bit easier to come by. I put everything I bought within the Round Squirrel Pouch, bowed to the store's owners, and left. I then finally got back to the inn, went upstairs, and opened the door to see Goshujin-sama quietly lying on his side atop the bed with his eyes closed.

It went without saying that Goshujin-sama wasn't actually even the slightest bit injured. We'd only told the guild he was so he could focus his efforts on gathering the information he needed.

I looked at the adorable expression that'd remained on his face as he slept and ran my hands through his hair. I would've gone even further, but refrained because I knew that he'd be able to sense that I did despite not actually being here.

“I'll go ahead and get dinner ready since it looks like you're still not back yet.”

I swallowed my laments, turned around, and headed downstairs so I could borrow the kitchen the same way I always did.

I'd planned tonight's dinner to be a mix of bread and soup, with every single last bit of effort and technique I had put into both.

Goshujin-sama had spent a lot of time training me in the way of the sword since we left the capital. Each time, he'd also remind me that gathering intel and coming to reasonable decisions were a pair of skills that would prove just as important in combat as actually knowing how to fight. I immediately put lesson of his to work, and started carefully but sneakily observing his reactions to the meals I cooked him so I could

figure out what I needed to do to match his taste.

To be honest, figuring out what he liked and didn't like wasn't actually as tough as I made it sound.

Eating things he liked made him loosen his expression and speak in a bit of a higher pitch than usual. He'd both chew and move the spoon to his lips much more quickly. However, he'd also try his best not to fill his spoon up all the way, just so he could enjoy his meal for even just a little bit longer. His gestures were so adorable that they almost made me want to think they were supposed to be some sort of trap! I felt that it wasn't fair for him to be that cute. All the little things he did made it really hard for me to stop myself from letting my feelings show on my face.

"...I really shouldn't be letting myself get carried away by my delusions."

I continued to think as I prepared both the vegetables and plump bird I bought off the market.

My cooking wasn't the only thing I'd been tuning to Goshujin-sama's preferences, I'd been doing the same with his spoon. I'd made adjustments to its overall size, depth, angle of curvature, handle width, and shape just to mention a few. I only made the slightest of adjustments each time. But changed them out quite often. The spoon Goshujin-sama was currently using was his 29th.

All 28 of the spoons that he'd used prior to his current one were sitting in my inventory as a sort of collection. My favourites were the first, which I'd many fond memories of, the 17th, which he'd used for the longest period of time, and the 28th, which he'd only just stopped using. I would've loved adding the bed Goshujin-sama was currently using to my collection as well, but, after some serious contemplation, I ended up deciding against it, as taking it would effectively just be me stealing it from the inn. As of late, I've been dealing with that urge by switching my things with Goshujin-sama's once every two or three days, with the reason for the lack of frequency being so that he doesn't notice.

"Wait! I just did it again! I really need to stop so I can concentrate on cooking."

I shook my head and cleared my thoughts so I could focus on making dinner.

Goshujin-sama liked his soup more on the meatier side as far as flavours went. He also preferred having recognizable vegetables to finely chopped ones.

I placed my fully prepared vegetables in a pot, got rid of the scum they produced, and threw in some goat milk and butter. All I needed to do now was let it cook for a bit and add a touch of salt. The end result would be one of the dishes my mother taught me, but it apparently resembled something Goshujin-sama called Cream Stew. Coincidentally, Cream Stew happened to be one of his favourites.

“Okay, time to check on all the other dishes.”

I lightly toasted a few pieces of rye bread and melted couple blocks of cheese on top of them. I timed it so that I finished preparing the last piece of toast right as the soup had cooked itself to completion.

The innkeeper walked into the kitchen right as I finished and nodded as if approving of my own work.

“Wow. Today’s looks just as good as usual. I’m guessing you had to prepare your Master’s share too?”

“Yes I did.”

“That’s... one tough life you’re living. Here, it’s not much consolation, but I’ll share one of these with you.”

She gave me a reddish fruit called a Eppla. I didn’t really understand why she did, but I was still grateful anyway because it was relatively expensive.

“Huh? Uhm, thanks.”

I cut the fruit into slices and trimmed the skin in order to make the individual pieces resemble bunnies before splitting the final product into two separate portions. ^[1]

(Goshujin-sama’s going to eat these bunnies right up... Kufufu. One day, he might just eat me right up too...)

I put a flat lid on top of the pot, placed everything else I made on top of it, and brought it upstairs. I didn’t have to carry any plates or spoons up with me because I had them in my Round Squirrel Pouch.

“Hey Minnalis. I just got back.”

“Welcome back, Goshujin-sama.”

Goshujin-sama happened to get out of bed right as I entered the room.

“Dinner’s ready. We’ll be having Cream Stew today.”

“It looks pretty good, as usual.”

The meal began after I handed him a bowl of soup with extra vegetables.

I nonchalantly observed Goshujin-sama as I ate. He seemed to be enjoying everything I made; tonight’s dishes were in line with his tastes. Knowing that made me happy, but I was too busy being jealous of the spoon to feel the full extent of my happiness.

Goshujin-sama was putting on a front and acting calm, but I could tell that his mood had been a bit sour as of about two days ago. He’d gone out hunting alone, came back covered in blood, and ended up really miffed ever since. Realizing that had caused me to want to squirm because of how adorable he was.

“How’s gathering intel going? Have you still not managed to figure out what you wanted to know?”

Goshujin-sama had used the experience he gained from killing all those Red Caps in order to gain yet another new weapon, one he called the 『Heart Flame Ghost Blade.』 Its ability allowed him to wander around as a ghost. He could go anywhere he wanted without being noticed, but he’d lose control of his body in the meantime, which was why we’d told the guild that he was injured.

Though Goshujin-sama would often seem happy, he’d actually be feeling quite the opposite. It wasn’t something that normally showed on his face, but I could tell because I’d always been watching him really closely. The reason he was almost always feeling down was because he was conscious of the fact that he’d gotten tricked prior to his reset.

“Gathering intel’s been going quite well. Today, I even managed to get my hands on a detail that supported one of my hypotheses.”

Goshujin-sama’s face suddenly clouded over in hatred. His expression had contorted the same way it always did when he lost control of his emotions.

“It’s just that I happened to see something Yumis keeps in her mansion. Seeing it pissed me off so much that it made me want to kill her right there and then. I never actually thought that I could grow to hate her even more seeing unless she tried doing something to me, but, I have. Observing her these past two days has really let me confirm that she’s nothing but the lowest of the low.”

He began smacking the plate his soup was in with his spoon as he spoke.

“Revenge isn’t something you can justify. It’s ultimately just an act of self-satisfaction, so I obviously won’t do anything that’ll leave me feeling unsatisfied. That’s why I wasn’t planning on letting anyone else take even the smallest piece of it from me, but...”

A dark smile appeared on Goshujin-sama’s face.

“It might be interesting to see what happens if I allow other people to join in on it this time around. I haven’t really plotted out the details of exactly what’ll I’ll have happen just yet. In fact, I think it might be worth running this one without a detailed plan, and just improvising.”

“Goshujin-sama, can you stop insinuating things and just let me in on your plans? I’ve been doing the Adventurer’s Guild’s requests all by myself lately, and even managed to get us promoted today. All this adventurer stuff is starting to irritate me. I want to hurry up and do revenge things, not sit around all day.”

Goshujin-sama never ended up punishing me for being off guard, but I still wasn’t able to forgive myself for it, so I allowed him to neglect me for a bit while I leveled myself up and honed my skills to prepare myself for when we finally began to put our next major plot into action. To be honest, I was hoping Goshujin-sama would eventually realize how I felt and give me an order that took my feelings into consideration, but I ended up becoming too impatient to let that happen. I couldn’t stand not being involved in his plot any longer, and thought I’d just about disciplined myself enough already. I was worried that I might actually miss out on everything if I didn’t start acting now. I wasn’t actually planning on being more than someone that helped out around the scenes this time around given that this particular slice of revenge was one with Goshujin-sama’s name on it, but that didn’t mean I didn’t still feel like I wanted to be a part of it, especially because our desires for revenged were shared. His hatred flowed into me, but I didn’t have anywhere to release it. It almost kind of felt like my mind was being manipulated, not that I particularly minded because it was Goshujin-

sama that was doing the manipulating...

I realized the direction my thoughts were heading in, so I made sure to use the pokerface skill so my emotions wouldn't show on the surface.

"My bad. I guess it was a bit cold of me to get all worked up in a vacuum all by myself like that. Wait, you said we ranked up? That's some pretty good timing. I guess we should probably stop doing things for the guild for now. How about we iron out a few of the fundamentals after I double check a few things tomorrow?"

"Does that mean it's finally happening...?"

"Yeah. I'll fill you in on all the details after we finish eating. I'd love to tell you everything right here and now, but it'd probably spoil the meal."

Goshujin-sama tossed the last piece of bread on his plate into his mouth as he spoke.

"Man, this stuff sure does taste good. I don't know what else I should've expected from a cheesy piece of bread that looked like it came straight out of Heidi." [2]

I wasn't quite sure what he was talking about, but, it looked like my plan to make him fall for my cooking was proceeding really smoothly.

Goshujin-sama and I were also once again going to start spending more time together, as we were finally going to start plotting out our revenge. I wanted to get to the nitty gritty, but first, I would need to finish the meal I had set out in front of me.

[1] Rabbit-Shaped Apple Slices.



[2] Reference to an old Anime based off a Swiss novel.

Chapter 16

A Day In A Certain Young Lady's Life

"My lady, I've brought you your meal."

"...Thank you."



I, Shuria, responded to the knock at my door by placing a bookmark in the novel I was reading and setting it aside. Only after looking outside the window did I realize that it was already noon. The book had been so entertaining that it'd caused me to lose track of time.

The exact piece of work I had been reading was one a lot of the other ladies had started to talk about as of late. It described a romance, one between an earl with fairy blood and a young female slave. Its plot focused particularly on the troubles that they had to overcome in order to realize their burning passions for one another. I'd only just started reading it, but was already intrigued and couldn't help but wish to know how it would end.

I really did think the novel was a wonderful one, but the l-lewder parts embarrassed me and made it a bit difficult for me to read.

"Your lunch today is a Muroo Beef Steak, a Potato Potage, and a salad made of Naruna Herbs. I'll have a chilled Eppla waiting for you as dessert once you've finished."

I moved over to the large table upon which one of the maids, Sori, arranged my meal and sat myself down in the seat closest to the windowsill. Sori had been working to take care of me for the past three years, and had really been doing her job well.

Though she was basically expressionless, she was quite gentle and kind. Moreover, she knew exactly what it meant to be a maid. That is, she didn't talk too much, and made sure to never overstep her bounds.

"Would you like to join me, Sori?"

"I'm terribly sorry my lady, but I am merely a lowly maid. I could not possibly bring myself to eat at the same table as you or Lady Yumis, your elder sister."

Sori bowed to apologize as she answered my question.

I couldn't help but think of Sori as someone really accomplished. Though she worked as my caretaker, she also found enough time to do much more than just that. She would often help make decisions regarding our territory when need be, and even acted as my elder sister's confidant. In fact, the two had been friends since childhood.

Her gallant, cool looking face, blue-purple tied up hair, and charming, womanly body made me feel a bit jealous of her. She was very different from me, who, despite being

human, had obvious, thick, Elven blood. I was already 14, but still looked really childish, mostly due to my height and chest.

“How do you feel about the dishes’ tastes? I believe the chef decided to use a slightly different recipe today.”

“They’re so delicious they almost seem wasted on me.”

“That’s great. I will pass your compliments onto the chef.”

I was really filled by the time I finally finished off the Eppla I had for dessert.

Sori had her subordinates carry off the empty plates after I finished eating.

“Umm... what about the usual thing...”

“You must mean the new stuffed animal. Please wait for just a moment.”

Sori left the room and returned shortly after.

“What do you think of this one?”

“...Thank you. It’s wonderful.”

The stuffed animal Sori bought for me today was one that looked like a large teddy bear. Its red and yellow patchwork body, sewn mouth, and brown button eyes made it look really cute. Best of all, it was really fuzzy and fluffy.

“Please excuse us, as we will now be leaving you to your business. Do let the maids stationed outside your room know if there’s anything you happen to need.”

Sori left the room after making the exact same statement she always did.

I took the teddy bear to my bed and played with it a bit by hugging it, rolling around with it and stroking its fur to satisfaction before finally doing with it as I had all the others and turning it into one of my room’s decorations.

“This one’s *really* cute, so I guess I’ll have to put it right over here.”

I ended up moving the brand new stuffed animal right beside my pillow.

“...Okay! Time to go through my daily routine!”

I purposefully pumped my fists and spoke out loud as if to encourage myself. The act I was about to repeat for the nth time was one I tried to do every single day: exercising.

The manor I was living in was a noble's, or more specifically, one belonging to the lord that governed the area. The food the maids served me was delicious, and the portions were always really big. I, as an ordinary village girl, was sure to start gaining weight if I continued eating such luxurious food day after day, especially since I was confined to my room. I've been making sure I got exercise everyday, both to prevent myself from getting fat, and to mitigate the stress that built up from being cooped up all day. But no matter how hard I exercised, I was never able to build up any muscle, mostly due to my elvish blood. That, I was actually a bit thankful for, as I really didn't want myself to develop a muscular looking torso.

I entered and used the shower in the bathroom connected to my suite after working up a sweat. Showering wasn't something I'd been able to do back when I lived in the village. There, I only ever bathed in the river around noon, when it was still warm out.

I was a bit worried about how odd I would feel upon returning to my old life and losing access to the shower, so I'd thought about restricting my access to it, but I couldn't. I wasn't able to resist the comfort it brought.

“...That felt great.”

“That's quite the immodest appearance right there, Shuria.”

“Y-Yumis!?”

My sister, Yumis, appeared to have been waiting for me to finish my shower, as she was sitting in the chair I always used, the one by the windowsill. Her face was pretty, and her smile gentle as always. Her hair, which reflected all the natural beauty of a lush, green forest, sparkled in response to the light beaming through the window.

As if to contrast her, I myself was dressed in nothing but a bath towel.

“I-I'm sorry!”

I hurriedly grabbed a set of clothes and changed into them.

“You don’t need to be in a hurry of any sort, especially because I’m to blame as well. I could have been more careful with my timing.”

“I-It’s definitely not your fault! I know you’re really busy, so don’t blame yourself!”

I sat myself across from my elder sister after ensuring I was wearing clothes and not seemingly nearly as unsightly as I’d been just moments before.

“I happened to get my hands on some delicious sweets, and was wondering if you’d like to share them with me. Oh and I’ve also got the usual letter for you too. Feel free to read it at your leisure.”

“Thank you! Thank you so much for everything you always do for me!”

I took the Audio Message Letter Yumis handed me and placed it inside one of my desks’ drawers. I wanted to listen to its contents immediately, but decided that I’d rather spend time with her because of how rare an opportunity it was.

“This letter will probably be the last. I’m on the verge of completing the spell, so you’ll soon be able to see your family again.”

“Thanks so much! These Audio Message Letters you’ve been giving me have really helped me feel at home.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m sure I’ve been making you really lonely these past few years, so it’s only natural I try helping you cope with it. Besides, my Grandmother’s the one who invented the Audio Message Letter, so getting a few for you every month really isn’t a big deal at all.”

Yumis smiled in her usual, kind manner. Her smile was so pretty that it charmed me and caused me to stare at her every single time.

“Alright, why don’t we start eating? The tea will probably start getting cold soon if we don’t.”

“Okay.”

And so, the two of us spent a bit of time together over tea. Yumis was a really busy person, and had to rush around extensively, so we didn’t really have many chances to spend time together. However, she’d always try to visit me so we could enjoy each

other's company regardless.

Though we'd only met each other three years ago, I couldn't help but feel that she, my elder sister, was my pride.



I first learned that I was Yumis' younger sister about three years ago.

The village I grew up in was a small, remote one to this city's, Elmia's, northeast. It was surrounded on all sides by dense woods, and lay at the foot of a mountain.

My family had consisted of me, my mother, and my younger sister.

I didn't have a father, a fact my mother had never even attempted to bring up in conversation. Despite that, we never really went hungry, in part because my Elven ancestry had blessed me with a frightening talent for magic.

I had always had golden blonde hair, fair skin, and the sharp pointed ears that you'd normally only ever find on Elves. My mother had always told me that it was because her Grandmother was of elven blood.

I also had an innate skill, one called "Scarlet Eyes." It allowed me to perceive magical energy even before it was formed into a spell. It was a very convenient spell that helped cast magic.

As the village had been founded by adventurers, it'd always been a peaceful place that accepted both beastkin and demi-humans like elves and dwarves. I had managed to make enough money to get by through the acts of using magic and emulating adventurers. I was never able to make enough for us to be considered wealthy, but I was happy nonetheless.

One day, all those happy days suddenly came to an end.

Shelmy, my younger sister, contracted a disease. It wasn't something that put her life in danger, but instead something that caused her to suffer constant, intense pain.

It could be cured if we just had an elixir, but, that wasn't something my family was able to afford no matter how far we stretched our finances.

I tried, I tried my hardest to save up as much money as possible, but I never managed to get enough to buy the elixir we needed. By then, we'd run out of options. We'd even started considering whether or not we should just sell Shelmy off.

And that was when I finally met Yumis, my older sister.

I learned that my mother had once been a maid in the service of Elmia's lord. He took her as one of his lovers, and in doing so, caused me to be born. Shelmy was conceived in the same way. The lord's wife, however, had hated my mother, and thus, drove her away after giving her a bit of money as consolation. She ended up taking me, who was just a child at the time, away with her. That was how the two of us then ended up living in the village at the foot of the mountain.

In other words, I'd learned that Yumis was my, our older half-sister.

She had come to the village because she'd heard of my magical abilities. Specifically, she offered to have me perform a ritual in order to give her my powers. In exchange, she said she would provide the elixir Shelmy needed, enough money to support my family for the rest of their days, and a promise to aid us in times of need.

It was an offer I accepted without so much as a moment's hesitation. I was a bit disappointed going through with the ritual would cause me to lose my magical abilities, but that wasn't worth nearly as much as my family's happiness.

I left together with Yumis after watching my younger sister drink the elixir and recover.

The ritual needed me to several conditions for it to succeed. I wasn't allowed to leave my room nor meet any of my blood relatives aside from Yumis.

Yumis knew that spending three years alone in my room would make me lonely, so she went out of her way to allow me the opportunity to interact with the rest of my family once a month through an Audio Message Letter. It was a really convenient item, as neither Shelmy or my mother knew how to write.

She also went out of her way to spend time with me every time she managed to get any fancy snacks even though she was busy with both researching magic and functioning as the area's temporary lord. Despite that, she taught me how to read and write so I had more to do. Yumis had even also told Sori to bring me all the stuffed animals and books I could ever ask for. It took no time at all for me to really start

thinking of her as my elder sister.

Yumis told me that she'd have both my mother and Shelmy move to Elmia so we could all live together as soon as I finished transferring my magical abilities to her. Apparently the lord and his wife had already moved into one of their manors in the royal capital and left all their duties to Yumis. There weren't any problems with my family moving back into the city.

Yumis was so kind that she would still always apologize to me for having shut me in my room for as long as she had even though she was already doing so much for me.

I couldn't wait to finally be able to see both my mother and Shelmy in person again.

Hearing their voices alone wasn't enough. There was still lots that remained untold.

I really wanted to see how much Shelmy had grown. She, didn't seem to have taken up too much of her Elven heritage, so I suspected that she might've already grown to be even taller than I was.

I also really wanted to eat my mother's freshly made Ricol pie. It was one of my personal favourites, and something I was sure Yumis would enjoy too.

It would be just wonderful if the four of us could all sit down and have tea together some day.

Just the thought of it made me incredibly happy. I couldn't wait!

I'd thought that my days would continue passing just as they would over the course of the past three years.

But then one day, things once again changed, as I happened to catch sight of an odd looking ghost.

Or rather, an odd looking spirit.

Note: This character says their own name instead of "I," "me", "my," etc. It sounds childish and cute in Japanese, but like cancer in English, so I refrained from it.

Chapter 17

The Hero's Spectre Runs Into Several Unexpected Situations

It happened in the afternoon two days prior to Minnalis ranking us up.

That day, I entered Yumis' mansion through the backdoor used by its staff.

"Whew. Doing this kind of work sure is tiring."

"I know, right?"

"Stop complaining, you two. They'll hold us all responsible if you get overheard, and I for one am not looking forward to being punished with extra work."

""Fiiine.""

Three maids exited the building and completed their chore of taking out the trash as they chatted away.

(Well, in I go.)

I slipped in through the open back door after casually glancing at the maids and double checking to see that they were still focused on doing their work. My current body was one that could easily phase through walls. The only reason I bothered going through a doorway was because this mansion was Yumis'.

The ghost created by the [Heart Flame Ghost Blade] consisted entirely of magical energy. Hence, it could pass right through the physical, but was highly susceptible to other magical energies. Yumis' mansion's walls had been reinforced with magic, and so, going through them was rather difficult. Entering through an open doorway was the better of the two options by far.

Invading through the back door would, under normal circumstances, entail entering a barrier and setting off one of Yumis' custom made spells. The spell would not only

notify her that someone had intruded and inform her of any relevant details, but also summon five highly defensive golems that would engage the intruder in order to buy time.

Of course, those conditions only applied under normal circumstances.

My prior experiences had allowed me to learn exactly how the spell in question functioned. In other words, I also knew that it had no effect on me in my current form whatsoever despite being of an extremely careful construction.

I was completely invisible and in a spiritual form. The only way for me to be detected was for me to be spotted by an individual possessing either an innate skill like Scarlet Eyes or a skill of the highest caliber like the Mind's Eye.

There was no way that she could have had the skill she needed to spot me as of right now. It was something she would only be able to obtain after training with me.

(You know, I think this is actually my first time here...)

I walked through a gorgeous, well decorated hallway. Being a spirit, I couldn't actually feel anything at all, but even so, I was able to tell that the carpet was soft. It just looked so gaudy I couldn't imagine it to feel any other way.

(Hmm... Where should I snoop around first...?)

The reason I had visited Yumis' mansion was so I could figure out exactly what I needed to do to make her suffer as much as possible. I knew what her goal was. She was completely obsessed with creating a magic item extraordinary enough to allow her to have her name carved into a specific Elmian stone monument. I clearly recalled how insane she had looked back when she tried to capture me; she had appeared obsessive and tunnel visioned. It was like she had completely lost her grasp on reality.

I knew that she'd always sought to fulfill that one goal, even from childhood, but I never was able to figure out why she obsessed over it *that* much. It had clearly been more than just a childhood dream. Her eyes had conveyed to me that she had seen the achievement as something that would instantly bring her some sort of benefit.

Figuring out her drive would allow me to turn it into her greatest weakness. There was even the added benefit of potentially discovering her other lesser weaknesses as well.

It would've been easy for us to just choose to physically torment her, but that alone wouldn't have been enough.

I wanted more, much more than just that.

(I guess I'll try looking for something along the lines of a study.)

Yumis' secrets were likely hidden away in her study, and her desires in her diary if she happened to keep one. Looking through both had a good chance of providing me with the information I needed.

This world's common sense dictated that those with higher status owned their rooms on higher floors, so I immediately went up the stairs.

The building was extremely vast, and exactly what one would expect of a personal mansion set aside for a feudal lord's daughter.

"Huh? What... was that just now...?"

One of the maids spun around as I passed her by, an action that caused me to stop in place and stiffen up.

She, a woman in her twenties with a blue-purple ponytail, scanned my general vicinity with a confused look on her face.

(Tsk! Did she notice me!?)

=====

Name: Sori Luelle

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Race: Human

HP: 310/310

MP: 222/222

Level: 23

Strength: 183

Vitality: 143

Stamina: 144

Agility: 208

Magic Power: 119

Magic Resistance: 122

Innate Ability: Intuition

Skills

- Pain Tolerance: Lv 2
- Presence Detection: Lv 1
- Presence Concealment: Lv 1
- Dismantling: Lv 3
- Night Vision: Lv 3
- Sword Arts: Lv 2
- Audacity: Lv 1
- Accelerated Thought: Lv 1

Condition: Good

=====

ステータス

ソーリィ＝ルーエル

Lv23

Soriy=Lurel

23 歳 女 人族

HP : 310/310 MP : 222/222

筋力 : 183 体力 : 143

耐久 : 144 敏捷 : 208

魔力 : 119 魔耐 : 122

固有技能 : 『直感』

ス キ ル : 『痛覚耐性 Lv2』 『気配察知 Lv1』

『気配隠蔽 Lv1』 『剥ぎ取り Lv3』

『暗視 Lv3』 『剣術 Lv2』 『鉄面皮 Lv1』

『思考加速 Lv1』

状 態 : 良好

Her stats page didn't seem to indicate that she was capable of seeing me. Her innate skill, intuition, must have kicked in.

"...It must've been just my imagination."

Sori, the maid, tilted her head and continued regarding the area for a bit before finally deciding to continue on her way down to the building's first floor.

(Oh shit!)

"Welcome home, Yumis."

"Hey Sori."

However, I wasn't allowed a chance to relax, as Yumis, the disgusting insect I wanted to crush, had suddenly appeared at the bottom of the stairwell.

"Weren't you scheduled to spend the rest of the day at the municipal office?"

"Stamping papers aside, I've finished all the day's work. I can just do that here, so I've decided to visit so I could catch a breath of fresh air. I'm having the documents I need to stamp delivered, but they're not here just yet, so I thought it would be a good idea for the two of us to take a bit of time in order to relax until they arrive. Could you bring the usual to my bedroom?"

"S-Sure. I'll do exactly that right away."

"Fufufu. I'll see you upstairs then."

(Huh, this actually looks like a pretty good chance to learn a bit more about her personal life.)

I felt like I was letting my guard down a bit too much, but I couldn't turn away the chance that I'd just been presented with. Seeing Yumis talk to the maid reminded me of her identity. She was both Yumis' confidant and the person taking care of her sister. Yumis trusted her so much that she had entrusted her duties as the feudal lord to her upon vacating her post.

The maid clearly knew a lot, and was probably aware of Yumis' circumstances. From that, I realized that this was a chance for me to spy on Yumis as she complained,

grumbled, and in essence, suffered.

The corners of my lips twisted upwards as I chased after the pair.



The initial reason I followed them was because I thought doing so would let me catch sight of an interesting scene or two. I hadn't been prepared to do anything more than laugh along as I heard her talk about her worries.

There was simply no way for me to have been ready to be exposed to what I was.

None whatsoever.

"Nnnn... Fufufu... This is how you like it, right?"

"Hyaaaauun... N-Not there, Yumis! Hyaah! Aaaah... nnn... Ngggghh...!"

"You're so cute, Sori. You don't have to hold back, 'kay? Moan all you want."

"Nnnhh... Aaahhhhh!"

(The hell? They're mating like pigs...!)

Mating technically wasn't the correct word seeing as how they were the same gender, but the point stood. I would've loved to watch them if they happened to be a pair of cute girls with no relation to the revenge I wanted to enact, but them being who they were had just made the whole situation into one huge turn off.

Thinking about it, I should've realized that something was off the moment Yumis suggested specifically heading over to her bedroom. The two had closed the curtains, shut the door, and even burned some scented incense before engaging in the act. Still, I never would've expected that they would start fucking in broad daylight. By the way, the "usual," was in fact a reference to a sort of viscous lube.

Its stickiness caused the two to look like a pair of maggots stuck together than anything else.

(Actually, you know what? Yumis being a lesbo isn't too bad a thing to have learned.)

I recalled that Yumis' heart hadn't ever swayed even in the slightest during my first run through. She never cared, regardless of how good looking the men that hit on her were. In other words, she wasn't bisexual. She was only interested in women.

"Aaahh... Nnnn... Nghhh..."

(Ugh... alright, screw this, I'm out. I can't take any more of this.)

I felt like I would take way too much mental damage and end up getting forced back to my actual body if I kept watching any longer.

I slipped through the door while lamenting the fact that I had taken unexpected damage for no reason.

(I guess I should get back to looking for her study.)

She'd be enjoying herself for some time to come, so, it seemed I would have a good bit of time in which I could stay semi-materialized and look around. Noting that, I shook my head to clear it of the unpleasant scene I just saw and went up the stairs.

I started entering and leaving nearby rooms in order to explore their interiors.

It took awhile, but I did end up finding what seemed to be the room I was looking for.

(It looks like this room's got two different physical barriers on it. I can't really figure out the details because it's got some sort of device inside that's meant to protect it against people hoping to sneak a peak, but I can at least tell that there's some sort of magic circle inside, and that it's affecting the entire room.)

The amount of defenses the room had almost made it seem *too* thoroughly protected. It was to the point that it became really obvious that she desperately wanted to hide whatever was inside of it. The fact that she had a device set up to prevent people from peeking inside the room with magic meant that the magic circle itself wasn't one made to sense or detect stuff, as the two effects would end up working against each other. In other words, the magic circle probably housed a spell that would attempt to harm intruders.

She must've really not wanted anyone entering the room.

I didn't have to mind the physical barriers because I was in an entirely spiritual form,

but, I did have to be careful of the magic circle and its area of effect. That said, entering the room could lead to a whole slew of different cases, so I altered my spiritual body's exterior by giving it extra magic resist.

Though I gauged the magic circle as a threat, it wasn't one I thought of as an immediate danger. It seemed to be rather slow-acting, so there wasn't much harm in me entering the room, investigating it, and then deciding whether or not I should stay after figuring out its precise effects.

(Okay. Time to figure out Yumis' secrets.)

I slipped through both the door and a barrier meant for detection in order to enter the room. I made sure to stay cautious so I wouldn't be harmed regardless of the effects produced by the magic circle within.

What I found was not anything like what I had expected to see, as the room's contents made it very clear that it wasn't Yumis' office.

There were stuffed animals everywhere, and not a single large desk in sight. As far as I could tell, the room was one meant for guests. There was only one person within it, a young girl I remembered as Yumis' younger sister.

I ended up finding something strange as opposed to a chance to dig through Yumis' deepest, darkest secrets.

(What... the hell...? The magical energy in this room is clearly indicating that there's some sort of contract spell going on here... but why exactly would that be the case...?)

The magic circle within turned out not to be the type that affected intruders. It instead was the type that forced its target into bearing a curse.

(And it looks like her younger sister is its target? The hell's going on here...?)

Maintaining the spell was a simple feat, but activating it required a type of magical energy that only Demonic Beings, creatures of a race derived from demons, could control.

I didn't understand why Yumis had one of these in her personal residence. Nor did I get why she had something like this, something she needed to hide from prying eyes, targeted at her younger sister.

(That's all I can tell at a glance. I guess I'll have to appraise the thing if I want to figure out any more.)

I came to a realization as the thought passed through my head.

“ ... ”

(Huh...?)

Yumis' sister, who had been sitting by the windowsill, had tilted her head and ever so slightly opened her mouth while gazing at me with her scarlet pupils.

(...Scarlet? Wait, wait, you gotta be kidding me!)

Her eyes stayed locked on me regardless of whether I moved left or right. She could clearly see me, with what was obviously a suspicious gaze.

I decided to appraise her to just to make sure I wasn't imagining things.

“Is that... a ghost...?”

(...Man, today's just been full of surprises.)

=====

Name: Shuria

Age: 14

Gender: Female

Race: Human (Elven Traits)

HP: 332/322

MP: 525/525

Level: 31

Strength: 133

Vitality: 213

Stamina: 194

Agility: 288

Magic Power: 549

Magic Resistance: 522

Innate Ability: Scarlet Eyes

Skills

- Presence Detection: Lv 1

- Presence Concealment: Lv 1
- Water Magic: Lv 1
- Wind Magic: Lv 1
- Meditation: Lv 3
- Dismantling: Lv 3

Condition: Good (Soon to be contractually cursed)

=====

ステータス



シュリア

Lv31

Shuria

14 歳 女

人族(エルフ返り)

HP : 332/332 MP : 525/525

筋力 : 133 体力 : 213

耐久 : 194 敏捷 : 288

魔力 : 549 魔耐 : 522

固有技能 : 『緋の瞳』

ス キ ル : 『気配察知 Lv1』 『気配隠蔽 Lv1』

『水術魔法 Lv1』 『風術魔法 Lv1』

『瞑想 Lv3』 『剥ぎ取り Lv3』

状 態 : 良好 (契約呪印進行中)

(Why the hell does she have Scarlet Eyes?)

Apparently there was a whole lot more going on here than I'd thought there to be.

I could say that for certain because I still vividly recalled the girl, and I could say for sure that, when I met her, her eyes had been anything but scarlet.

Chapter 18

The Hero Vents

(Hmmm... A part of me wants to say that I just forgot how she looked because of how long it's been, but another part of me is sure that her eyes were green back when I first met her.)

Not all people with red eyes had the Scarlet Eyes skill, but the opposite was true. Scarlet Eyes was an innate ability, everyone that had it was born with it. In other words, it was impossible for anyone that had it to have green eyes.

I very clearly remembered the events that'd taken place here during my first time through. This city was the one in which I fought my first battle against a group of enemies that numbered far more than just 10 or 20. Yumis' little sister had left an especially deep impression because of her elf-like appearance, and thus, I felt like I could really get behind the idea that, back then, her eyes had been green. I would've been able to confirm my suspicions if I had been able to appraise her the first time I met her, as I would've been able to double check my notes on her. But unfortunately, I hadn't unlocked the 『Eight Eyed Bookblade of Transparency』 until I was about halfway through my journey, meaning there was no data for me to check in the first place.

(It doesn't look like she's planning on kicking up a fuss, at least not right away.)

My first instinct was to immediately flee, but I managed to stop myself after realizing that there was no real need for me to do so.

I instead began contemplating the fact that I had just discovered one of Yumis' secrets. I arrived at the conclusion that I had finally found a side of Yumis I'd yet to see, half through intuition, and half through logical deduction.

(The only problem is that I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to do next...)

"I want to say something like, "don't worry, I'm not anyone suspicious," but I doubt you'd actually believe me."

I altered my form to give it substance. Specifically, I created a sort of pseudo-body so I could speak. It went without saying that my actual body was still laying in bed back at the inn, I hadn't teleported myself or anything. The form I had just created was one composed entirely of magical energy, so it was a good bit weaker than even the average person.

My appearance hadn't actually changed. Not even she would see me any differently than she had before even with her Scarlet Eyes.

The reason I had called out to her was because I was confident that she wouldn't feel as creeped out if I spoke to her instead of just silently standing around before finally leaving. I needed to buy enough time for me to investigate the room so I could determine both what its purpose and the reason for which she was here.

"You... don't seem to be a ghost. Does that mean you're a spirit?"

"Huh? Uh, wait, hold up, calm down."

I seemed to have somehow set the girl off, as she stood up from her chair and immediately approached me. Her expression hadn't changed much, but she radiated an aura that seemed to indicate she was interested in me.

"I've lived in the forest for almost all my life, but this is my first time ever seeing a real spirit."

I could see stars in her eyes; the look on her face was like that of an elementary schooler as they stared straight at someone they looked up to.

"There are so many things I want to ask you! Where do spirits normally live? Do you guys live in the forests just outside town? What do you eat?"

"Uhhh, I think you might be misunderstanding something. I'm not a spirit."

(What the hell is going on? I don't remember her being anything like this. Is my memory really just that bad?)

Shuria was, at least in my memories, a quiet girl whose expression wouldn't really change regardless of how she was addressed. Her answers had always been short, and, for the most part, consisted only of yeses and nos. We spoke on multiple occasions, but she'd never been the one to initiate any of our interactions. I'd always thought that

she might as well have just been a doll.

That was why I was so surprised by her as she was now. That said, she did still bear a bit of a resemblance to how she was during my first run through. Namely, her voice was quiet, her tone was flat, and her emotions couldn't really be discerned from her expression. She was a bit weirder now than she was then. The gap between her distinct lack of emotion and the ideas she seemed to be trying to express led to a sense of dissonance.

I couldn't deny the possibility that I was jumping to conclusions, as it could very well just be that she happened to really like spirits.

"Oh, uhmm... then... uh..."

"How about you try calming down before you keep talki—"

"Hyah!"

The overexcited young lady accidentally grabbed my arm and tore it off.

My body hadn't been any stronger than one made of styrofoam to begin with, and my lack of concentration had caused it to become even weaker, so the result didn't come to me as a surprise.

"PI... pa... pyu..."

"Hey uh, you okay?"

I asked the girl a question.

I myself was doing perfectly fine. I didn't feel any real pain, and fixing the arm that'd been snapped was something I could easily do at a moment's notice. She, however, didn't really seem to be doing too well. Her soul almost seemed to be slowly leaving her body through her mouth.

I fixed my arm and waved it in front of her to demonstrate that I was fine, but she didn't recover regardless.

"Po..."

“Well, that didn’t work.”

I sighed before resigning myself to waiting until the girl somehow managed to mend her mind.



It took her a few minutes to finally regain her sanity.

She took a seat once she did. This time, she’d chosen to sit at the table in the room’s centre as opposed to returning to the windowsill. I had done the same; the two of us more or less found ourselves across from each other.

“That... was embarrassing. I’m sorry I panicked, I’m feeling much better now. My name is Shuria. Is your arm okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. As I’m sure you can see, my body’s basically composed entirely of magical energy.”

“Wow... Spirits sure are amazing.”

“I told you, I’m n-, ah screw it. Nevermind.”

It seemed like it would be easier for me to get Shuria to talk if I just left things as is and had her think of me as a sort of spirit. To that end, I decided to try imitating a speech pattern belonging to one of the priests I knew back before I was transported to another world.

“So umm... Why are you here, Mr. Spirit? Are you running some sort of errand?”

“I believe your name was...”

“Shuria, please call me Shuiria.”

“Right... Shuria, I happened to have something I wanted ask of you. Have you eyes allowed you to discern that the magic cast upon this room is one that acts upon you?”

I’d focused quite a bit of my magical energy in order to appraise the magic circle within this room during the time Shuria had spent staring off into space.

The result of that appraisal was an interesting one.

=====

[[Six Coloured Magic Circle of Time-Based Transition]]

This magic circle allows its target to grant their proficiencies and aptitudes in fire, water, wind, earth, light, and darkness magic to its secondary target through the act of remaining within the magic circle's confines.

The target's soul must be as compatible with the secondary target's soul as that of a blood relative's. The transfer will begin to occur once this spell progresses past the 50% point.

Target: Shuria

Secondary Target: Yumis Erumia

<Current Progress> 96% (7 additional days required for 100% completion)

=====

The magic circle's effect was a pretty nasty one. It took both one's skill levels and affinities, so it wasn't actually possible for the person who's stats had been taken to ever regain their lost power.

In other words, it basically made it so its target would never be able to use magic ever again.

I once again used appraisal, and this time, examined Shuria in more detail. She should've had high magical affinities given that she had elven blood, but her all six of her elemental ones were basically moot. The few remaining magic-related skills listed on her page clearly should've been higher leveled given her the rest of her stats.

The spell's ability to steal one's skills and affinities meant it had to be capable of operating on the soul, which in turn meant it was something that needed time, and lots of it. Shuria clearly hadn't left her room for quite the extended duration.

"The magic circle is helping me give my sister my magical talents. I was really surprised to learn that something like this could actually exist!"

(Well yeah, no shit. It's something only demons are supposed to be capable of using and not something that a normal person's supposed to be aware of.)

Her having Scarlet Eyes meant that she must've been able to see her magical powers slowly drain from her body.

I was able to see it as well because of the passive ability my ghost blade gave me, and honestly, all I had to say was that it really wasn't much of a pretty sight at all. It wasn't something I wanted to watch happen.

"So why exactly did you want to give her your magical talents?"

"Shelmy, my younger sister, caught a disease that couldn't be treated without an expensive elixir. I couldn't afford it, so I struck a deal with Yumis, my elder sister, and gave her my magical powers in exchange for the cure."

(Her younger sister? They had another sister?)

"Ohhh. Wait, why would you have to pay? Yumis and Shelmy are sisters, aren't they? Shouldn't Yumis have just bought her the cure?"

"Shelmy and I are only Yumis' half sisters. We'd lived our entire lives apart from one another, so I couldn't just go ask her for money just because we were all related."

"Did you consider it a fair trade?"

"Yup. I'm a bit dissapointed that I'll lose my ability to use magic, but, Yumis promised to give my family enough money to live out the rest of their days. Magic had never been anything more than just a means to earn money so we could get by in the first place."

Shuria paused for a bit before continuing.

"Another reason I don't mind handing over my magical abilities is because Yumis said that she'd be using my magical talents in order to fulfill her dream. I'm glad I can be of help to her."

"I guess that must mean you really like your big sister?"

"Mhm! I love her! Yumis is an amazing person. She works super hard and is capable of carrying out the fuedal lord's duties even though she's only just a few years older than

me...”

An ever so slight smile appeared on Shuria’s face as she attempted to describe just how much she loved Yumis, the first real change in expression that she’d displayed ever since initiating conversation.

I smiled back at her as I got myself lost in thought. The overly cold calculations I had going through my mind functioned to shut all her words out; everything she said went in one ear and out the other.

(She stole the magical talents her younger sister inherited from her ancestors in order to move her own research forward? And in exchange, she cured another one of their sisters and handed their family enough cash to get by...?)

That explained why Yumis’ magical affinities had been so much higher than those of the average human.

Knowing the source of Yumis’ talents wasn’t really going to help me in any which way seeing as how the curse Shuria was currently afflicted with was near completion. Moreover, her actions hadn’t really been particularly notable, as she had seemingly engaged in a fair exchange.

Or at least that was how things seemed before you really started to think about them. A multitude of questions began flowing through my mind the moment I looked even the slightest bit deeper.

How exactly did Yumis learn about this magic circle, and how did she activate it? Why was the Shuria I had in front of me so obviously different from the Shuria I’d met during my first run through?

It was possible that I merely had the wrong impression of Shuria, but I didn’t believe that to be the case. Something about this whole thing just felt too off for that to be true. Shuria, in her current form, didn’t quite seem capable of expressing herself, but she’d clearly demonstrated her ability to feel strong emotions. The Shuria I remembered had almost seemed dead on the inside. Her emotions hadn’t run nearly as deep.

I couldn’t help but feel bothered by the strange sense of discontinuity that continued to assault me. Something was wrong, but I couldn’t put my finger on it.

“ [How have you been doing lately, Shuria?] ”

“Wait, is that...?”

I suddenly heard a voice right as I found myself stuck at a sort of critical junction.

(Hmmm... It looks like one.)

I looked over at the windowsill in order to find the sound’s source, a letter situated atop a desk. Its state seemed to indicate that I happened to enter the room right as Shuria broke its seal.

The water blue sheet stamped with the Erumia family seal was a device that would play the voice preloaded onto it whenever one ran anything across its surface.

“Oops. It looks like one of the flowers fell.”

One of the purple and yellow petaled flowers disconnected from its stem, fell onto the letter, and caused it to start playing the voice file it contained.

“ [The village is looking wonderful again this year. Your Sunset Flowers have bloomed, the flowerbed is looking really great. Shelmy started taking care of them after she recovered, so they’ve turned out really well.] ”

(Something about this just makes me feel... wrong.)

“Is that your mom?”

The female voice I heard coming from the letter was one that I couldn’t help but feel to be strangely familiar.

“Yup! And this is my sister, Shelmy.”

“ [Hey, how have you been doing lately? Are you sick? Have you been sleeping without anything covering your stomach? Me, I’m feeling a lot better. You always say you’re doing fine, but I still can’t help but worry. You’re really bad at talking to people, so I can never be too sure you’re actually fitting in. I’ve been spending a bit of my time taking care of your garden. I heard we’ll be able to see each other again soon! I can’t wait!] ”

“...Shelmy always makes fun of me even though I’m older than her.”

“Ahaha, she sounds like a pretty interesting person to have around.”

I couldn't help but think about my own little sister as I watched an ever so slight expression of embarrassment show up on Shuria's face. Unlike me, my sister always had her shit together. She would always admonish me much in the same manner Shuria's younger sister did to her.

Several strong emotions surged within me, but, in spite of that, I couldn't help but feel that something was just... off.

The second voice was higher pitched than the first, but it still gave off that sense of incongruity.

(...That's it! The voices seem... forced. They lack emotion.)

They weren't monotone, and it didn't seem like someone was reading them off a script, but they failed to carry the intonations natural speech tended to contain.

Their voices were too patterned, regular, and mechanical.

It was like they sounded exactly like the Shuria I'd known in the past.

Everything clicked and fell into place to form a single hypothesis the moment that exact thought passed through my mind.

(Ahaha... Is that what's going on here? If so, it'd totally make sense for her to have not realized. Yumis could've just told her that that's just how those letters are.)

Shuria wouldn't have suspected a thing even if she thought something was off, so long as Yumis, her “kind sister,” told her she wasn't experiencing anything outside the norm.

(The thing with contractual curses is... Yeah, she must've either used *that* or had them come from a demon that'd devoured their magical energies... The cost is definitely... Yeah, everything makes sense if you just take what Yumis does in the future into account.)

My imagination birthed an overarching plot so horrid that even just thinking about it made me feel all dizzy.

(Ugh... Not this shit again...)

The world began to spin.

Her situation was too similar to my own. I couldn't help but want to empathize. The dark emotions I always tried to hold back began flaring up with me.

"Mind if I ask you something?"

"...?"

I gently called out to Shuria sometime after the letter finished playing the sound it contained.

"Is the flower that just fell onto the letter the same type as the ones you have growing in your garden?"

"Yup. They're a type of plant capable of growing under almost any sort of condition. They grow really well, but they don't seem to be able to multiply."

"They look really pretty."

I stood up from the table as I spoke.

"I have to go. Could you please keep everything about me a secret? The truth is, I wasn't actually supposed to talk to you."

"R-Really? O-Okay! I won't say a thing!"

Shuria balled up one of her hands into a fist and squeezed down on it as she made me a promise. I was confident that she wouldn't tell anyone about me, not even Yumis, because the look on her face was pretty much identical to how it'd been when she first ran up to me earlier.

"Um, could you tell me your name before you go, Mr. Spirit?"

"Sure, why not? My name's Kaito."

"Kaito... Okay! Do you think we'll ever meet again?"

“Yeah, I’m sure we will.”

I transformed my body back into that of a ghost’s and dispersed the effect brought about by the [Heart Flame Ghost Blade] in order to return to my body.



“Haah... The world sure is full of scum, isn’t it?”

I returned to my body after experiencing a strange floaty sensation not too different from the kind I felt when I teleported.

I was currently the only one present, Minnalis had yet to come home.

“Alright, I guess I should get going.”

I felt my anger flare up again as I reflected on what I had just discovered. I felt like it had come time for me to vent all the rage I had built up. The original plan was for me to grab Minnalis in two or three days so we could have her experience fighting a horde of enemies while also farming exp, but, I felt like I had to change it. My encounter with Shuria had come off to me as a twist of fate.

I’d been planning to test out my trump card some time soon anyway. I needed to know just how effective it would be against Yumis with my stats as they currently were before actually putting it into practice.

Moreover was the fact that I simply couldn’t stand what was happening.

I decided to stop trying to justify myself. I was fully aware that my drive came not from reason, but instead from emotion.

I wanted to just go on a rampage and destroy everything around me. I felt like a ball of flame that’d escaped its container and no longer had anywhere to direct itself.

“Gulp gulp gulp.”

I drank a potion to replenish the mana that becoming a ghost had drained before leaving the inn and heading out the eastern gate.

I detached myself from the crowd and headed down the path that lead into the forest

all by myself.

Logically, I understood that what I was just wasting my time, and that I should've instead focused on conducting additional investigations. I knew that I should've been focusing on verifying my hypothesis, but I just couldn't.

I didn't want to see Yumis' face. I didn't feel like I would be able to hold back any longer if I did.

"Oh sweet, there they are, the perfect things for me to use to both blow off all my stress and test out my trump card."

There were many more monsters here now than there were back when we killed Barkas and his companions. It came to me as no surprise that my current impression was that the place would soon be overrun.

My lips curved up into a smile. The more things I had to hit for no real reason, the better.

I walked into the forest with casual gait, only to be attacked by a pair of goblins before even taking ten steps. I cut down through both, bones and all, as I summoned the [Soulblade of Origin] in my right and the [Emerald Crystal Blade] in my right.

""Gugyarah!?""

"Sorry, I don't particularly have anything against either of you. You just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time."

I used a decorative string to mount the [Emerald Crystal Blade] to my hip drawing [Holy Blade of Vengeance] in my left as if to replace it.

"Gugyoh!!" "Bubrah!?" "Kyupi!?" "Gogyaaah!" "Borouu" "Gyann!?"

"This isn't going anywhere. I can't seem to calm down. I must look really pathetic right now, I should make sure I never let Minnalis, my accomplice, see me like this."

I went on a killing spree; I annihilated all the monsters that approached me, and went around rushing down the ones that didn't. Their dying cries filled my ears, there wasn't a moment in which I didn't hear at least one monster scream in pain.

“Again, I’m really sorry.”

It only took me a few minutes to more or less completely exterminate all the monsters located within the forest’s shallower part, so I moved towards a clearing that happened to have a huge swarm within it.

The clearing was about as large as a gym, and had so many monsters present that it almost seemed to resemble a sort of camping ground.

There were all sorts of monsters, namely red caps, green boars, hobgoblins, sword goblins, grey garms, orcs, and trolls. At a glance, it seemed to me that there were actually enough monsters here for me to fight to my heart’s content. Many of the 100-odd individuals had already begun putting on a display of either fear or hostility.

“Gulp gulp gulp.”

I downed an entire MP potion in a single swig and chucked its container skywards.

“Gugya!?” “Gugyu!!” “Gogyaa!!”

I didn’t really think about my approach and instead just dove straight in. My first target was a group of three goblins that happened to be just a bit cut off from all the other monsters. I impaled them all spilled their blood all over as I extracted my blades from their corpses.

“I’m going to have all of you die so I can vent my stress.”

I shifted gears, honed my focus, removed my body’s limiters, and went an entire step beyond just using the full extent of my strength.



“Kuhaaaaah! Ahahahahahahaha!!”

Heads flew and hearts stopped as my blades engaged in a merciless act of violence.

“Die! Man, this feels amazing! I can’t get enough of it!”

The blood that’d risen to my head impaired my ability to think. I’d almost felt like I’d downed a hard couple shots of liquor; my thoughts were drowned in both intoxication

and exhilaration. My instincts drove me to kill and think about nothing but the act of murder.

I was glad that there existed something I could kill for fun.

“Kuhaaaaah! Ahahahahahahaha!!”

A seemingly insane laugh continued to leave my throat despite the fact that I hadn’t intended on it.

I continued to move and trample anything in my path.

I didn’t bother attempting to kill my enemies in the most efficient manner possible. I didn’t go for vital points or aim for weak spots. I simply used the strength I’d obtained from removing my limiters to bash my weapons into them the moment I saw them.

It only took me five minutes to finish my rampage and pile the monsters’ corpses into a sort of hill. The blood that drained from their bodies soaked into the ground and turned into a sort of crimson mud. The only thing left alive in the midst of all that chaos was me.

“Hah... Hah... Whew.”

I sighed deeply after making sure there were no more living things in the surrounding area. I’d finished venting. I was still a bit pissed off, but the flames of hatred within me had already been reduced to mere embers. The only thing I was really still feeling was a sense of emptiness.

“How come I can never figure anything out until it’s already too late for me to do anything about it?”

Words began to leak out of me, one by one.

(You were right, Retishia. This world is... as real as can be. There are good parts to it, but its filled with all sorts of scum.)

My nails dug into my palms; I squeezed my hands so hard I began to bleed.

I felt like trash. I knew that I would choose the course of action that worked best for the purposes of my revenge regardless of what ultimately ended up happening to

Shuria. I only sympathized her and selfishly vented my anger because I knew she wouldn't be able to get in the way of my revenge

"...Why can't things ever just be undone?"

I gave voice to a complaint that'd been swirling around inside of me. I knew, but didn't want to acknowledge that it was just a pretext, something I was saying because I was throwing a child-like tantrum.

...Why did I have to be taken back to the moment I was summoned?

It was too late.

I'd already lost everything by then.

Why couldn't time be pushed even further back?

"Ahaha... How pathetic of me."

The fact that I was given a chance to enact my revenge was already, in and of itself, a miracle.

I knew that the world didn't exist for my sake. Time would continue to tick regardless of how I felt. I'd been given a second chance, but that unbreakable rule still did apply. I'd sworn vengeance, but that didn't mean I'd actually wanted a second chance.

But again, my feelings were utterly irrelevant. I ended up going back in time regardless because that was what some Goddess had dictated would happen upon my death.

I knew that I didn't have any say in it, and that it was something that would've happened regardless, but, I still wanted to pathetically lament just how unreasonable my circumstances were.

That was the real reason why I'd thrown a fit of rage, the real reason for which I'd needed to vent. Seeing Shuria and coming to understand her situation had been the same as a blow to the nuts. It hit me right where I was weakest.

"Oh man, I'm being really lame right now. I have to make sure no one ever sees me like this."

I wanted to take back everything I'd lost.

My lingering affections for the past, for everything that I'd held dear prior to my summoning, caused me to break down, almost into tears — a sight I didn't want anyone to see.

Because that wasn't how an avenger was supposed to be.

"I'll kill them. I'll murder every single last one of them in cold blood, and trample over their emotions for my own enjoyment."

I honed my thoughts and concentrated them on my bloodlust.

I'd already made my choice, all I needed to do now was abide by it.

I cleansed my heart of any remaining weakness and focused the entirety of my being on enacting my revenge. I burnt away all the impurities I had within me and left nothing but the a filthy, cold vengeful flame.

I renewed my vow to kill every single last one of the bastards that'd betrayed me.

There was no point in wasting time being sentimental when my prey was right before my eyes.

...I was going to torture and torment her in every which way before finally killing her as she wallowed in despair.

Revenge was a twisted, jealous mistress. I needed to focus on it and nothing else as enacted it.

"Haah... Okay, looks like I've finally managed to calm down a bit."

Spitting out all my excess emotions had allowed me to immerse my entire mind in displeasure and rage.

"Ahaha... Aw crap. This... isn't really a laughing matter, is it?"

I only just realized that my body was covered from head to toe in monster blood. I hadn't noticed it when I was running about swinging my sword around, but now that I had, I realized I was extremely uncomfortable.

I still had about 30% of my mana left, I was feeling really mana drunk because of how high my rate of consumption had been. I normally hated the feeling, but today, I kinda seemed to like it. It felt like it was warming me up.

(It took me longer to wipe them out than I'd been expecting even though I used my trump card. I guess I'm still far, far off from what I used to be.)

I decided, after entertaining the thought, that I wanted to clean myself off immediately, so I pulled out a barrel I normally used to store water I could drink in an emergency and raised it overhead so I could wash myself clean.

And as I did, I recalled a bit of the conversation I had with Shuria.

[So um, Kaito... Do you think we'll ever meet again?]

"Yeah, I'm sure we will."

I decided, there and then, that, if she so desired, I would lead her down my heretical path, much as would a demon in fairytale.

"Okay..."

I shook myself dry and stretched after washing myself off before allowing my shoulders to drop back to their usual positions.

"Man, I'm starving, tired, and I feeling kinda sluggish."

I rubbed my stomach as I voiced a few complaints.

It was about 3 in the afternoon. I knew I already had lunch, but for some odd reason, I was feeling as hungry as I would've had I not eaten all day.

The method I had employed to wipe out all my enemies not only made it easy for me to get mana drunk, but also made me hella hungry.

I ignored the bloody landscape around me and immediately grabbed a piece of dried meat within my round pouch and immediately chowed down. I knew I couldn't just leave all these corpses here, so I had Slucky devour them. He wasn't able to get rid of the scent of blood that filled the area, but that wasn't really something I could do much of anything about.

I didn't really have any reason to stay around, so I left the area so I would no longer have to smell the scent of blood as I continued to chew on a chunk of jerky.

Chapter 19

The Day A Certain Individual's World Was Turned On Its Heel (1)

That day began like any other, and to most, that was probably exactly what it was.

But to me, it was much, much more. To me, the day's events were so impactful they seared themselves into my memories.

I can still vividly recall myself yawning lightly and rubbing my eyes as I listened to the birds chirp away.

I can still vividly recall myself basking in the morning sun's warmth.

I can still vividly recall myself staring into the beautiful evening sunset.

Because it was on that day that everything changed.

And that was why I was so sure I could never forget it, not even if I was to die.



"It doesn't look like Kaito's coming today either..."

I sank all the way into the bath and began blowing bubbles into it.

Four days had passed since Kaito, the spirit, had first slipped through my doorway. I was really surprised back then. I never thought I'd ever have a chance to meet a real spirit. Seeing him reminded me a fairytale my mother had told me when I was younger. The half-elf girl it was about lived together with the spirit of light, which happened to dwell within her doll. They would always run into troubles and had to deal with it by racking their brains, but they would always find a way out. Eventually, they found themselves living happily ever after. Naturally, I was aware that the story was just that, a story. There was no way it could possibly apply to me. Besides, I wasn't even a half-elf to begin with. I just happened to be a human whose elven blood ran strong. I didn't

particularly want to live together with a spirit forever either. All I ever wanted was to talk to one and maybe become its friend.

“...I guess I really should’ve been more careful about not being so overly familiar after all.”

Spirits tended to be whimsical and hard to please. They also seemed shy and didn’t really like showing themselves to people. They could hide from the average person with ease so long as they wanted to, but my Scarlet Eyes could pick them up because they were basically walking lumps of magic. That was why almost no one ever saw them unless they wanted to reveal themselves.

“...I’ll make sure I ask him to be my friend next time we meet.”

I knew that there were items out there that could summon spirits, but they were really expensive. The average person would never even be able to see one, let alone use one. Yumis had one, but she wasn’t able to let me see it because of how delicate it was.

(I’ll probably need to talk to him about something that interests him, but I’m not really good at maintaining long conversations...)

I continued to think as I splashed around in the tub.

I’d never seen a spirit before, so I almost mistook Kaito for a ghost when I first saw him, but he actually materialized, and I was able to touch him, so he had to actually have been a real spirit.

“I’ll make sure I get a few topics ready ahead of time so I don’t bore him next time we talk.”

I got out of the bath, wiped myself off, put on my nightgown, and began using a towel to dry my hair.

I then used a pitcher to fill my cup with water before picking up with both hands and drinking everything in it in one go. One cup wasn’t enough, so I repeated the action three times before I was finally satisfied. Downing each cup in one go was something the old man that lived next door had taught me when I was little. He told me that it was proper etiquette after getting out of the bath. To be honest, the right way to do it was to put one of my hands on my hip as I drank, but, my mom scolded me when she saw me do that, so I ended up just holding the cup with both hands instead.

And then, with my body all warmed up, I finally snuggled my way into bed. Yumis told me that it would only be a few more days until my magic was transferred to her.

It would soon be time for me to bid farewell to the room I had in Yumis' manor. I was told that I could take all my stuffed animals with me, but I still couldn't help but feel a bit lonely, but that was okay. Because I was finally going to start living with mom and Shelmy again.

"Wait! Oh no! How will Kaito know how to find me once I leave this place!?"

My body lifted itself out of bed with a start. At first, I thought I could just ask Yumis to redirect him, but I then realized that she would never be able to see him unless he showed himself to her because she didn't have the Scarlet Eyes. Besides, he'd asked me to keep everything about him a secret, even from her.

In the end, I was never able to figure out what to do. I instead just ended up falling asleep while still lost in thought.



"It's all done, Shuria! The spell's finally finished doing its job. Thanks for hanging on for so long."

My elder sister visited me a few days later, her face decorated with a gentle smile. I already knew what she came to inform me, not only because she'd told me the day was close, but also because my Scarlet Eyes had allowed me to see the magic that'd swirled around within the room had finally dissipated. The first thought that came to mind was that I unfortunately hadn't been able to meet Kaito again after all.

"...Does that mean I can finally go outside again?"

"Yup. You see, I actually had planned for today to be a day off. What do you say to having a bit of an outing together?"

"...An outing? That sounds great."

"Okay, I guess that's happening then. Sori, could you please get everything ready?"

"Yes Ma'am. Consider your orders received."

Sori bowed once and left the room.

I was finally going to go outside for the first time in a long while, and I was going to get to spend time with Yumis to boot. I couldn't wait.

"It looks like today's going to be a really good day."

"That it does."

Yumis smiled in her usual, gentle manner as she responded to me.



Yumis took me through Elmia's streets so we could shop. I hadn't been composed enough to look around when I first arrived, so it was actually my first time getting a good look at the city.

"Elmia is huge! I think I said this when I first arrived too, but there are so many people and so many shops!"

"Fufu, Elmia is indeed a fairly big city. It must be quite the sight for someone that's never lived outside a village before."

My elder sister had disguised herself by putting on a big hat and a pair of glasses. Likewise, I was also wearing a hat, but it was several sizes too large for me and made it hard for me to see.

"...Yumis, Yumis! What's that!?"

"That's a magic item that's supposed to you light a fire. We actually have one of those in the kitchen back home."

"And that?"

"It's one of the many board games people play in their spare time."

The weather was great, so merchants were calling out to everyone that happened across their stores and stalls in a lively manner. Looking around, I realized that the number of people walking down this street alone was already way larger than the number of people that lived in my entire village.

“Oh...”

“What is it this time? Oh, I see. That adorable stuffed animal must’ve caught your eye.”

I saw a series of large, white, cat-shaped plushies sitting on a nearby stall selling miscellaneous goods. They were holding a fork in one hand, a knife in the other, and wore a bib with a bit a ketchup-like substance splattered all over. I couldn’t help but freeze the moment I saw them, to which my elder sister reacted with a giggle.

“Hello. How much would it be for one of these?”

“One will cost you eight big copper coins.”

“Sounds perfect. I’ll take one. Here, Shuria. It’s yours, so you hold onto it, okay?”

“...Can I really have it?”

“Ahaha, I’ve already went ahead and bought it, so if anything, I’d be more troubled if you didn’t just accept it.”

I was really happy. Of course, my mood had in part stemmed from the fact that I was given a cute stuffed animal, but it was mostly because my kind older sister had personally given me a gift.

I couldn’t help but smile a bit as I gave the plush a big hug.

“It looks to be just about time for lunch. What do you say we head over to the park so we can find a spot to eat the sandwiches Sori made us?”

“That sounds wonderful.”

Yumis lead me towards a beautiful park. I’d seen pictures of parks many times before because they were often illustrated in the books I was given, but I’d never had the chance to see one in person. The village hadn’t ever had anything this fancy.

We picked a bench, sat down, and each ate half of the sandwiches out of the basket we’d been given. The two of us had eaten together several times in the past, but today’s lunch felt like it was extra special.



We continued shopping around even after we finished lunch. I had so much fun that time almost seemed to fly; evening came before I even knew it.

“Um... were you really okay with spending today with me, Yumis? I had a lot of fun, but...”

“Is something the matter?”

“I was a bit worried that I ruined your day off. It kinda felt like you were just letting me have all the fun.”

“Don’t you fret over that. Today was the first time I’d gone shopping in quite a while, so I was having just as much fun as you were. Besides, I was just celebrating my three year long spell’s completion anyway, so don’t you worry, okay?”

Yumis kindly smiled at me yet again.

“It looks like the sun’s going to set soon, so why don’t we move onto our next destination?”

“Our next destination?”

“You see, the truth is, your mother and your sister are coming to Elmia today!”

“Wait... Really!?”

“Haha, I didn’t tell you because I wanted to keep it as a bit of surprise, but Sori, your mother, and your sister are currently working together in order to get a party ready.”

(I can’t believe it...! I can finally see mom and Shelmy!)

I was never really bored because Yumis would visit, and because I would get to trade letters with mom and Shelmy once a month. But I’d always felt a bit lonely.

It’d already been three whole years since I’d last seen the rest of my family.

I’d already known that I wouldn’t be able to see them for a long time, but three years had felt much longer than I’d been expecting.

“Alright, let’s go. Everyone’s waiting for you at your new home.”

“Sure! I can’t wait!”

I walked through the evening with my elder sister by my side. I managed to stop myself from dashing through the darkening streets, but, I couldn’t hold back the feelings that were surging through my chest. Three years had finally passed. I was finally going to get to see my family again.

I had no idea where we were going, so I made sure I stayed one step behind Yumis and let her lead me in the right direction.

And it was for that reason that I knew not the expression she had at the time.

Chapter 20

The Day A Certain Individual's World Was Turned On Its Heel (2)

"...Is this my new home?"

"Yup."

Yumis brought me to a building in a quiet, remote area in the city's outskirts. It was really tall, and I couldn't really see the whole thing without moving my head around, but my Scarlet Eyes allowed me to realize that it was just like Yumis' house. There was a huge spell cast over the entire property. I only knew how to use magic instinctively, so I couldn't figure out what the spell did, but I guess it was probably a Barrier of Defense, the same type of magic that my elder sister had cast on her own home.

"I've labeled this place as one of my "secret laboratories." You can rest assured that not even Mom or Dad will be able to enter it without my permission."

(That means we won't have to worry about the Fuedal Lord or his wife! We won't have to see him so long as we just stay at home while he's in town!)

My father and his wife scornfully drove my mother and I from their home, so I was sure that neither of us wanted to see each other.

"The door's open, Shuria."

"Coming!"

The inside of the house was really plain looking. It went without saying that it couldn't hold a candle to the private mansion I'd been living in for the past three years. Still, it was much better than the single story bungalow that I lived in back at the village.

"We've been awaiting your arrival, Yumis, Shuria."

Sori, who was still wearing her usual maid uniform, bowed as she greeted the two of

us in her ever so dignified manner.

I began looking around in hopes of finding either Shellmy or my mother, but to no avail.

“...I don’t see Mother or Shellmy anywhere.”

“That’s just because they’re a bit further inside.”

Yumis seemed to know exactly where they were, as she confidently began to walk through the building. I ended up following Sori, who’d already started tracing my elder sister’s steps. Yumis opened a door to reveal a set of stairs and began descending into the building’s basement. I started to feel a bit worried because there was some sort of revulsive magical energy drifting around within.

“Um... Are you sure this the right place, Yumis...?”

“Trust me. It’s right over here.”

“Wait for me!”

A bit of doubt started to form within me, but I decided not to let it bother me as I continued to follow my elder sister.

My unease started to fade as I advanced. It was overpowered by the nervousness and happiness that struck me as I realized that each step I took was one that brought me closer to seeing my mother and little sister again. We’d been exchanging letters for years and we used to live together, so I found my nervousness to be a bit weird.

A simple, iron door lay at the bottom of the staircase.

“Everyone’s waiting for you just beyond this door.”

Yumis smiled as she moved out of the way and let me go on ahead of her. I moved my hand towards the door and tried to open it, but stopped before I did.

I couldn’t help but hesitate.

(Uuu... I’m feeling really nervous.)

I didn't really know what to say. I wasn't sure how I was supposed to greet the family members I'd been away from for a whole three years. I knew my voice was really quiet, and that I was bad at projecting it, but I really wanted to give them a nice, warm, loud greeting nonetheless. That was why I took a deep breath before finally twisting the creaky, iron door's handle and pushing it open.

"Mother, Shellmy! I'm so glad to see you again... in...?"

My voice started out loud, but it quickly died down as I looked into the room.

"..."

The sight I was greeted with was nothing like the one I'd been expecting. The door I opened had led to a dim, prison-like cave. I wasn't welcomed by Shellmy or my mother, but rather, the disgusting magical energy I felt earlier and a swarm of groaning *things*.

All the *things* were locked behind the prison's iron bars and wrapped in magical energy from head to toe. They seemed to be made out of some sort of gross, raw flesh. Many even had their internals exposed. They moved around by dragging their half inside-out bodies along the cold, stone floor. The groans I'd heard earlier clearly came from their gaping, hollowed out mouths.

"Y-Yumis, I think those might be undead!"

The creatures' bodies were distorted and different far too greatly from any living thing I knew for me to identify them, but I still recognized them as undead nonetheless. My Scarlet Eyes allowed me to see their mana as it radiated off of their bodies. The magical energy they gave off was clearly one that belonged only to the undead, as it was the type that was fueled by some sort of negative emotion.

"I've never seen those before, but I'm sure they're undead!"

"You're right. That's exactly what they are. They weren't able to maintain their original forms. I tried using magic to prevent them from rotting and distorting further. It kind of worked. They stopped decaying, but they still ended up getting discoloured over time."

"...Huh?"

I turned towards my elder sister the moment I heard her response. She was still

smiling the same way she always was, but, for some odd reason, I couldn't help but momentarily fail to recognize her.

"They probably wouldn't have turned out this poorly if I let them keep their hearts, but I decided to take them since beating hearts are one of the best catalysts for purifying magic stones for use in magic items. The undead can still move around even without their hearts, but heartless undead tend to have a harder time storing up magical energy. Their bodies start to rot if you just leave them be."

Yumis placed a hand on her cheeks and sighed after stating a series of facts in an uncaring manner. It was almost like the only thing the scene before her caused her to feel was the embarrassment of her own failure.

"W-What are you saying?"

The *person* that resembled my kind elder sister smiled. Her voice, her face, and the gestures she made all perfectly matched Yumis'. but the air she gave off was completely different. That sudden change in her tone and overall atmosphere made her seem like a whole new person.

"Techniques that involve the use of the spirits of the dead sure are difficult. Very few people know how to use them, and those that do don't really tend to leave behind much data or research. That's why so many of these turned out this terribly. Still, they're really quite valuable as lab rats. I can do whatever I want to them. It's a real shame that the only thing I've managed to do so far is give them the ability to speak by throwing a few monster parts into the mix. Next, I think I'm going to see if I can make it so they can think again."

"..."

Just who is that?

The question ran through my mind as I gazed upon the woman standing beside me. My eyes told me that she was Yumis, my kind older sister, but my mind simply refused to believe that to be true.

Yumis would never make that sort of expression. Nor would she ever say anything that horrible.



“Oh come on, chin up. Why are you looking all scared? Isn’t today the day you finally get to see your mother and little sister again? Come on, they’re right over here.”

“I... St...”

Yumis grabbed me by the hand as I stood dumbfounded. I tried to resist purely out of reflex, but she overpowered me and forced me to follow her.

“Now why don’t you enjoy that emotional reunion of yours?”

“Kyah! W-What are you saying, Yumis? Yumis!?”

Yumis threw me into the cell all the way at the end of the prison. I hurriedly used my hands to break my fall, and because of that, ended up dropping the stuffed animal I’d been holding onto. I turned around, only to see the prison door shut behind me. Inside the cell with me were two of the undead whose species I had still yet to discern.

“Hii...!!”

Like the others, the two right beside me had their darkened skin covered in a layer of slime. I had no idea what they were at first, but getting a closer look allowed me to finally realize that they somewhat resembled people with all four of their limbs chopped off. Their chests had slight bulges to them, and the part that seemed to be their heads bore a slight resemblance to a face. They had two holes roughly where a human’s nose would’ve been, and, though they had no lips, they had teeth exactly where people would’ve had them.

The two I was caged with differed slightly from the rest. They didn’t groan in the same hellish manner that all the others did. Still, they were undead. They didn’t have eyes, but they somehow seemed to have sensed me, as they soon began to approach.

“S-Stop...”

A sense of dread assaulted me. This wasn’t the first time I’d faced the undead, but I’d since lost the power I would’ve used to defend myself.

“N-No! Stay away! Let me out of here! Yumis! Yumis! Let me out!”

I grabbed the rusted iron bars and desperately screamed in terror, but Yumis refused to help me. Instead, she simply stood there and smiled in her usual manner.

“Hey Shuria, you said you wanted to see a spirit stone, right?”

“Huh?”

Yumis pulled out an item from within her pouch, one tightly wrapped in a sealing cloth. She unwrapped it to reveal a purplish-black jewel.

“T-That thing’s... giving off... the same magical energy that was always in my room...”

“Oh, you can tell? Having the Scarlet Eyes sure does seem convenient.”

Her smile warped, and in doing so, became much colder than the one I was used to seeing.

“Aren’t you glad you can finally see a spirit? This one’s a bit discoloured, but it’s still a spirit nonetheless.”

“[Wow, you’re terrible. Does that really have to be the first thing you say after not talking to me for so long?]”

A voice came out of what seemed to be nowhere as the same type of magical energy that my room was filled with began billowing out of the stone in Yumis’ hand. There was so much of it that it could even be seen with the naked eye.

The magical energy, whose colour not even I could discern, swirled about before finally taking form.

“That’s... a... demon...”

It had a giant gaping mouth and sharp, fanged teeth. Its horns were curved inwards like those of a goat, and the wings that sprouted from its waist were covered in a reddish-black membrane. Its skin was black and grey, and bore a sort of rugged, rock-like texture. The creature was both a fairy, but also not one at the same time. Its function caused it to serve as what was effectively the very antithesis of an angel. Its species name is widespread, and had been recorded in many a piece of literature. In short, it was a Greed Demon.

“Ah... uh... ah...”

I didn’t understand what’d just happened.

I failed to comprehend the scenario that'd developed before my very eyes.

"Weren't you the one that got all pissy when I started calling you a spirit?"

"[Kekeke, that'd be because we demons can't stand being lumped in with your everyday ordinary spirits.]"

The creature's voice was unpleasant, it almost sounded like it was speaking in both a low and high pitched voice at the same time.

"[So is she supposed to be the last sacrifice? Oh, wow, she's even got a bit of elf mixed into that soul of hers. Hot damn, that's some first rate produce right there.]"

"Hiii... No...!"

The demon licked its lips with its purple-saliva covered tongue as its cross shaped pupils moved around in its eye sockets.

"I'm sorry! I don't know what I did, but I'm sorry! Please, don't do this to me! Please just help me!"

"Oh don't you worry. You haven't done anything bad enough to warrant an apology."

Yumis extended her hands through the iron bars and stroked my cheeks in her usual, gentle manner.

"But it can't be helped. Your fate had been decided from the very start."

"Huh...?"

"Your life and soul were both a part of the price I paid to activate our little contract spell to begin with. And would you believe it? The demon specifically wanted a soul that lived everything up to its last moments in bliss. What a selfish request, right?"

"[No no no, you have it all wrong. I'm not selfish, I'm just a gourmet.]"

Yumis smiled as she always did, but the flickering candle flame that lit our surroundings caused it to appear extremely distorted.

"You demons sure love to say whatever comes to mind. Wasn't it you that started off

by saying “quantity over all else?” Sheesh, you even made me wipe out her entire village.”

“[That’s just because times change. Back then, I just really wanted to stuff myself. I wanted to eat as much as possible. You see, happy souls are something like a delicacy, but the cheap, distorted, miserable kind is pretty good in its own right. It’s kinda like how you humans like junk food.]”

“What... are you saying...?”

I didn’t understand what was going on.

I didn’t understand what I was seeing.

I didn’t understand what I was hearing.

“Oh come on, don’t you know that demons are notorious for how much they demand in exchange for granting a wish, right? This one wanted 50 different living people, so I decided to make use of that village of yours. The population was a bit too big, but I couldn’t just leave the survivors, so I brought them here. Come on, can’t you hear how they’re welcoming you? They’re much more lively than usual today.”

“What!? That can’t... be true...”

I turned towards some of the undead and observed them more closely the moment I came to understand the implications of what my elder sister had just said.

They no longer looked like humans, or anything like any sort of naturally occurring creature for that matter, but there was still a tad bit of magical energy within that belonged to something other than the undead. It was only barely clinging on, but it was there nonetheless. And as I looked at it, I came to realize that I recognized it.

“That’s... that’s Grandpa Jas’ mana, and that over there’s Grandma Ymir’s! That must mean you really did...”

My world began to blur.

Tears started cluttering my eyes. An odd buzzing sound started to fill my ears. Everything I heard, I heard twice. It was like the world as a whole had begun to echo.

“Wow, you can tell that much? Those Scarlet Eyes of yours will make for some good materials. Anyway, I’m done here, do as you like, but make sure you don’t forget about our contract. You can only have her soul, not her body. I’m going to want to make use of her corpse.”

My world distorted even further.

I stuck my hand through the cage in an attempt to get my sister’s attention, but I failed to reach her.

“Wait! Wait! Yumis! Yumissss!!!”

I shouted and shouted, but Yumis didn’t care. She never once looked back after turning heel and walked towards the dungeon’s exit.

Her footsteps slowly vanished; she left me all alone with the demon.

“[Kakakaka! You’re still asking her for help despite all that she’s done to you? Man, that Yumis woman has got some great taste in how she treats people. She wouldn’t even bat an eyelid if I ate someone right in front of her. Her being a human sure makes for a waste of potential kekekeke.]”

“You’re lying! Yumis would never do anything like that...! And I even have proof! Mother and Shellmy sent me lots of letters, and they never mentioned anything bad happening to the village!”

“[Huh? Oh, yeah, that’s cause that’s what I ordered them to say.]”

“...Huh?”

What... did he just say?

“[Why don’t you try looking at those two undead if you don’t believe me? Your eyes should tell you exactly who they are.]”

That’s not possible.

There’s no way Yumis would’ve ever done anything that horrible. There was no reason for her to. I was being such a good girl...

“Ahh... Aahhhhh... Aaahhhhhhhhhh!”

“[Come on, weren’t you always going on and on about how much you wanted to see them? Well? Aren’t you just soooo happy?]”

Haven’t you always wanted to see your beloved family again?

Everything broke. The whole world seemed to start to crumble as the demon’s words entered my ears.

“Noooooooooooooooooooooooooo!!”

“[Ukakakakaakakakakaka! Great. This is perfect. Your soul is looking so delectable and filled with despair that I can already taste it!!]”

The undead creatures I turned my gaze upon were undoubtedly the family members I’d been with my whole life, the mother and little sister I’d always lived with and loved.

“[You know what, I’ll even be nice enough to let you hear their voices one last time.]”

The demon waved his hand and moved some of his mana into both Shellmy and my Mother.

“Red...”

“He... ar...”

The area around the mouths started to move awkwardly. They gnashed their teeth a few times before finally speaking the lines I’d heard just a few days ago.

“How have you been doing lately, Shuria?”

“You always say you’re doing fine, but I still can’t help but worry.”

“Please... just... stop...”

The demon’s hearty, obnoxiously loud laughter took my world’s few unbroken fragments and crushed them.

“[You know, the reason you can still recognize them even after all they’ve gone through

must be love, huh? Oh man, that's rich. You know what? I'm glad we met.]"

"You're lying... You have to be lying... What did I do wrong? What did I do to deserve this...? "

"[Hehe, I'm not lying at alllll. You yourself didn't do anything bad, but that sister of yours sure did. Just look at what she did your precious family. I bet this gets her off. Hahahaha, she's even more demonic than most actual demons.]"

My body went limp as my sensations began to leave me. I lost even the ability to feel my tears as they rolled down my cheek.

"I... see..."

I'd always seen the world as a warm, kind place. I'd thought of it as a soft blanket made out of silk.

But now, it'd changed. The whole world had been turned inside out.

All my warm memories had transformed from silken threads to sharp needles. They began piercing right through me and causing me pain.

(It was all a lie. It'd all been a lie from the very start. Her smile, her kindness, and the time we spent together were all just parts of a web of lies. The only reason she gave me books, the only reason she took me out today was so she could keep lying to me, so she could reinforce the idea that she was my kind older sister.)

"Haha... hahahaha. How ridiculous. The whole thing was just a ruse."

I was such an idiot. I not only trusted the bitch that murdered everyone in my village, but also treated her like a beloved member of my family. I let her shut me in a room and steal my talent for magic even though she'd turned both the mother and sister I loved into a pair of disfigured messes.

"[Is it happening? Have you finally fallen into the depths of despair?]"

"Shut up! Blaze, oh orb of flame, Fireball...!"

I tried to create a projectile and fire it at the demon out of rage, but the magical energy I poured into the attack ended up just dispersing throughout the air without taking

form.

“I... I can’t even cast that anymore...?”

I’d lost every last bit of the magical talent I once had. I couldn’t even retaliate against the demon that was about to consume my soul.

“Fufufu... Hahahahaha... Haahahahahahahahahahaahhh!”

The situation I was in was so ridiculous it caused me to chuckle. A dry laughter filled my surroundings as tears continued to pour from my eyes.

“[Uhihihi, it looks like your soul’s really going to end up being quite the tasty one.]”

My vision was blurred, but I could still see the demon as it spread its wings.

“Why...?”

Why did this have to happen?

How did things turn out this way?

I’d always thought that the world was a wonderful place. But I was no longer capable of believing in it. Even my most pleasant memory had long just become another thorn in my side...

“[Good, good. I do love me a soul full of bitterness.]”

“I’ve had enough already... I don’t want to see or hear anything anymore.”

“[It looks so good that I can’t help but want to eat it right now. Actually, you know what, that’s it. It’s time for me to dig in.]”

Colour had started to drain from the world around me, but the demon, sneer and all, remained ever so clear nonetheless. He was slowly extending his arm towards me. I knew that the moment it finally reached me, my life would be forfeit. The moment he reached me, it would finally all end. And so, I, Shuria, awaited it. I simply sat there and did nothing as my last breath drew closer and closer.

But then I realized something.

“[Oh? You’re still planning on resisting?]”

“...I can’t let myself die. I won’t let this be over just yet.”

Though I wanted to give up, I ended up moving my body backwards in an attempt to avoid the demon’s touch.

Because I realized that I wasn’t satisfied.

“...I won’t forgive her. I won’t forgive that stupid bitch! I’m swear I’m going to get my revenge and pay her back for all she’s done to me!”

“[Ohhhh, not bad at all. The ones that resist all the way through end up being even more delicious than the ones that don’t.]”

I don’t want to die.

I don’t want to let it all end.

Not like this.

A thirst for retribution welled up within me and filled every last fibre of my being.

I hated her. I wanted to kill her so badly that I couldn’t contain my own emotions.

I decided that I wasn’t giving up, that I would get my vengeance no matter what.

And so, I swore an oath, an oath of vengeance.

“...I swear I’ll kill everyone that involves themselves with her. I swear I’ll murder everyone that’s ever done anything to her benefit.”

“[Oh my. I’m sure she’ll feel real hurt if you tell her that. Hehehehehe.]”

I felt nothing but hatred for the demon that lay before my eyes. It had conspired with her and helped her bring her plans to fruition. I wanted to tear it apart, burn it alive, bite through its flesh, drown it, and strangle it with my bare hands.

I wanted to make it suffer, to force it into a cage of despair that no light could invade. And I wanted it to die in there.

No.

That wasn't right.

I didn't want to just let it die.

I wanted to do the honours.

I wanted to kill it with my own two hands.

I knew that resisting was pointless, but I started throwing stones at the demon. When I ran out, I instead resorted to sand.

My thoughts were filled with naught but hatred, hatred for everyone and everything that'd forced my current fate upon me.

But it didn't matter.

It didn't matter how frustrated I was. Nor did it matter how much I struggled.

Nothing was going to change.

"Ugh... arghh...!!"

The demon grabbed me by the hair as it licked its lips.

I tried to shake it off, but it was too strong. I couldn't get away.

"[Don't worry. She told me she was going to use your body, so I won't rough you up too much. I'm just going to be sucking out your soul and stopping your heart with my demonic poison.]"

"Let... go of me... you monster. I'm going to kill you!"

I desperately scratched at his arms in an attempt to get him to drop me. I used as much force as I could. I didn't even mind having my nails torn off as long as it meant hurting him.

"[Kuhahaha. It's been a long time since I've had a soul as high class as yours. Don't worry, I'll make sure you don't get lonely. I'll even mix your magical energy together

with what's left in those failed undead over there.]"

The demon let go of me and extended its hand towards my mother and sister.

"Ugh!? Stop it...!"

"[Demonic Absorption.]"

I wasn't capable of understanding what it was muttering, but the results were self evident. I didn't need any sort of explanation.

He caused them to explode. Red blood splattered all over as their bodies were destroyed. What remained of them was just a bit of black mist, a substance the demon sucked up and absorbed.

"You fucking asshole! How dare you! How dare you!"

"[Well well well, whatever happened to you? Weren't you just trying to get as far from me as you could? Now look at you. I guess that must've been quite shocking to see.]"

The demon grinned.

"[Don't worry your little head too much. You'll soon be joining them in my stomach.]"

Tears of anger and frustration once again caused my vision to blur as I screamed at him and repeated the same questions over and over again.

Why, how did it end up like this?

I didn't do anything wrong, so why did this have to happen?

"It can't end, not like this..."

That bitch was going to keep using me even after I died. She was going to do to me what she did to my family members.

She was going to turn me into an ingredient and use my eyes to create some sort of magic item. She was going to use me for her experiments before finally turning me into an undead.

I was much more frustrated by what she was going to do to me after I died than the fact that I was going to die.

Where did I go wrong?

How did I end here of all places?

Just when did she first decide she was going to betray me?

“[Anyway, anyway, enough of that. It’s time for me to eat you, and for real this time.]”

The way the demon smiled made me recall Yumis’ own.

[So you’re Shuria? It’s nice to meet you. I’m Yumis, your older sister.]

Specifically, it looked exactly like the one she had when we first met. The resemblance was so striking that her voice had even began echoing through my head.

(That... was probably when it all started...)

“I swear... I swear... I’m going to kill her.”

“God damn it. I can’t believe your circumstances are really *this* similar to my own. This has to be a god damn joke, and a terrible one, at that.”

“Huh...?”

I saw something flash as the prison bars were cut open. The metal poles fell over and began rolling around. The demon’s arms, which’d been right before my eyes, fell to the ground as they were severed from its body.

The person that’d caused the sudden change was a black eyed, black haired swordsman.

His face was a familiar one, but yet not at the same time. His body, which I’d known to be spiritual, had become one with physical form.

“Kai... to...?”

“Sup. It’s been a while. I’m here to see you again, just as promised.”

He answered the question that I couldn't stop myself from asking in a casual tone.

“[Who the hell are you? Don't you know it's rude to interrupt, human?]”

Kaito turned around to face the demon as it posed its question.

“I'd love to open with “It may be rather presumptuous for me to say,” or something like that, but I'm actually here to run a bit of a recruitment drive today, so I'll refrain.”^[1]

In his hand was a single, blue-silver blade with two orange coloured fluffy balls hanging from the bottom of its guard.

“I'm someone that's come a long way for the sole sake of torturing the bitch that summoned you to death.”

He raised his blade and pointed it towards the demon as his lips began curving upwards. The dark smile on his face was so full of his burning passion that I almost wanted to call it heroic.

“I'm none other than the fool they call the The Avenger's Second Coming.”^[2]

[1] Really famous line, especially in Kabuki.

[2] Subject to change. Sounds horrible in English. JP: Nidome no Fukushuusha

Chapter 21

A Demon's Temptations (1)

"[Huh. I have no idea what you've been going on about, but that's a good soul you've got there. It almost feels like I've seen it somewhere before... Well, whatever. It looks delicious, so I might might as well eat you right up too!]"

The demon's disgusting voice entered my ears as I turned to face it.

"Is that supposed to be a compliment? I'd much rather believe a demon's ramblings than an angel's, but I really could care less about what you think."

I scornfully laughed off the demon's words as I fixed the grip I had on the [Heart Flame Ghost Blade.]

"[Man, you sure are a merciless one. And you seem like you're probably a pretty decent swordsman too, with how you lopped my arms off.]"

"Yeah, and? I know your kind. You don't give a shit. A cut like that doesn't mean shit to you. Losing a limb or two doesn't even count for real damage, with your body being how it is."

"[Oh, you've met my brethren before? That supposed to mean you've got a good pair of eyes or something? It doesn't look like it.]"

Demons were, in essence, a subspecies of spirit. All spirits fit into one of eight distinct categories, with the biggest similarity between them being that they were all clumps of mana with consciousnesses. Though there were eight subspecies and eight different elemental systems, the two in fact lacked a one to one mapping. Only six of the eight were based off the elements, with those six being: fire, water, earth, wind, light, and darkness. The two remaining element types, null and non-systematic, didn't have any spirits associated with them even though they were elements for which people could have affinities. The last subspecies of spirits were instead classified as angels and demons. Personally, I hated them both even though they were on the exact opposite ends of the spectrum.

That, however, was irrelevant. What did matter was that I was currently staring down one of the aforementioned spirits, specifically the kind that was demonic in nature.

“Let’s just say I’ve had a bit of an odd past, one convoluted enough for me to know that you demons don’t have brethren to begin with.”

“[Wow, what a surprise. So you’re even aware that we don’t see each other as brethren even though we’re of the same make? Silly human, if you know that, then you must also know just how purposeless your opposition is.]”

The demon grinned as it regenerated its arms.

The two limbs I’d cut off dissolved into thin air as the demon healed. It was like the process of restoring himself involved reabsorbing them.

“Why... are...”

I turned my gaze towards her in response to her incomplete question. She’d collapsed onto the bare earth beneath her, her clothes torn and dirtied.

“Sit still for a bit. I don’t want you dying on me before I recruit you.”

Saying no more, I focused my eyes back on the demon.

“You’re being a bit of a bother. You mind scrambling?”

I raised my blade and pointed it towards the inhuman creature as I spoke.

“I don’t want to waste my mana, so I’ll let you off if you run your ass away right this instant.”

“[You think I, being the esteemed demon I am, would run away? And from a delicious looking meal no less? You’ve gotta be kidding me. What the hell, man? You got brain damage or something?]”

“Well, I see you’ve made your choice. Die.”

I poured my mana into the [Heart Flame Ghost Blade,] lighting it ablaze with a blue-white flame as I pursued the demon. Its attempts to open up some distance between us failed. The flickering flames that decorated my sword flashed as I robbed it of its

other arm. Light filled the underground prison as the fire spread from my blade to the wound it created.

“[Woah there. So you were a magic swordsman? That does make you a bit more notable, but still, won’t make much of a difference. Your flames are too weak to burn me.]”

I ignored the demon’s words and instead used my time to shred the arm I stole from him.

“[Come on man. You know that’s pointless. All I have to do to make a full recovery is shift my shape a little bit, and I’ll be right as rain again. Just like th—]”

The demon, who’d been acting all high and mighty, froze up in the middle of his sentence.

“Well? Weren’t you going to regenerate?”

“[W-What the hell did you do to me!?!]”

“Take a guess.”

Demon’s bodies weren’t made up of flesh and bone. They were just lumps of a specific type of mana given a physical form, meaning they were only able to reabsorb their body parts so long as they remained constructed entirely of their own essence. Its body needed a very specific composition. All I had to do to prevent it from healing was disturb its magical composition by injecting my own mana into the body parts I lopped off.

Purifying its magical essence was effectively the same as filtering a specific type of sand from a dune, a task that was too time consuming to be considered practical mid-combat. My flames, which were in fact fueled by magical energy, would continue to scorch the demon’s body and maim its wound beyond the point of recovery in the meantime.

The 『Heart Flame Ghost Blade’s』 ability to grant me a spiritual form seemed impressive, but was in fact nothing more than an added bonus. The soulblade’s true worth stemmed from its ability to attack magical and spiritual beings. Its flames could reduce creatures without physical form to ashes; it let me murder angels and demons by mixing my mana with theirs. The whole spiritual form thing was just an alternate

application of that same ability.

“[T-That’s impossible...! That isn’t something that you should be even remotely capable of!]”

“Okay, that’s enough of that.”

“[Gwwaaah!]”

Demons, being the magic-based creatures they were, typically wouldn’t take much damage from anything other than spells that made use of the the holy element, a higher tier version of the light element.

And as a result, the species’ members had the tendency to adopt a fighting style that involved outright ignoring their opponent’s attacks. They would typically brute force their way through their enemies by sitting there and casting powerful spells with long chants. For that reason, the demon found itself confused and incapable of a proper reaction to my attack. Its motions were filled with numerous fatal flaws.

I stepped forward and positioned myself right in its face as I raised my blade in an upwards slash. The blow tore both its left wing and other arm from its body.

“[Fuck!]”

“Yeah, no. You’re not getting away like that either.”

The demon leapt backwards while hurriedly altering its magical makeup and dematerializing itself, a tactic that would’ve worked on anyone but me. My ghost blade provided me the passive ability to see it even its dematerialized form.

I swung my sword diagonally over my shoulder, severing the demon’s entire right leg and everything under the knee on its left. Naturally, I made sure I cut the demon in such a way that it wouldn’t be able to regenerate.

“[W-Why the hell can you see me!? How the hell is that sword cutting me when I have no physical form!?]”

“What are you, stupid? Do I look like the type of softie that’d be dumb enough to explain my methods to you? You should know that already, demon. Can’t you see into my soul?”

“[Motherfucker! What the hell are you!?!]”

Having lost its balance, the demon fell over.

It was game over. The demon no longer had any means to move. It couldn't even fly seeing as how one of its wings had already been removed. It was far too close to me for it to actually complete any sort of magical incantation. I could easily destroy it the moment it tried.

“You demons have always believed too much in your bodies and how far they could take you. You don't feel pain, and you're able to regenerate almost any damage you take. You lack any semblance of the instinct needed to avoid my attacks. Wow, look how nice I am, explaining everything to you. What do you think? How's my soul looking right now, demon?”

The demon's only reaction to my gaze was to tremble.

How rude. I'd even gone out of my way to explain its downfall.

“[W-Wait! Please! This isn't my fault! T-This is just something I have to do, I was forced into it by the contract I made!]

My blade's flames flared up and roared as I poured increasing amounts of mana into the weapon.

“Yeah, I know. You demons can't do shit unless you enter into a contract. You basically have no effect on the outside world under any other circumstance.”

“[T-That means you'll let me go, right? I-I won't kill the girl you've got behind you if you do. I've already gotten everything I was supposed to have, according to the contract I made. Leaving her alone won't violate it. Me and that other chick, we already don't owe each other anything right now. I-I can promise I won't make another contract with her either.]”

“So what?”

I lifted the blade in my hand above my head.

“[P-Please man, just let me go... Lend me a hand here, man...]”

“Nah. I hate it when people I could care less about ask me for help.”

“[S-stop it! No! Don’t! Please!]”

“Fuck off.”

I readied myself to swing—

“Wait, stop!”

—only to be physically halted the moment before I could.

“Huh? What the hell are you trying to do?”

Shuria, the girl the demon had been torturing up until just a few moments prior, wrapped her arms around me in a desperate attempt to prevent me from executing it. My first instinct was to assume that she’d been charmed, but I knew that wasn’t right. I’d been constantly keeping tabs on her status in order to make sure I wasn’t caught off guard by that exact thing.

“Don’t kill it, Kaito.”

Shame filled me the moment I saw her hate-filled eyes. I couldn’t believe myself for overlooking what I had.

“I won’t let you kill it! I want to be the one that kills it!”

“Right... Good point. I should’ve known you wouldn’t want me to poach your prey.”

I would’ve felt the same if I were in her boat. I’d also be mad if some random smug looking douchebag that knew nothing of my suffering came out of nowhere and killed the person I wanted to take vengeance on before I could get to them. Mad enough to kill, at that.

I wouldn’t mind if other people joined in my vengeance, even if their reasons for seeking it differed from my own, but there was no way I could tolerate being unable to participate. Just watching was the same as getting cucked. It was, in and of itself, a form of torture. I’d rather sit on a chair made out of molten lava than idle around and watch as someone else got revenge on whatever it was I wanted to personally end.

(...It does seem like it could work. The demon will need a fair amount of time to recover.)

I glanced at the demon and confirmed that it was trying to take in magical energy from its surroundings despite being taken aback. It seemed to have either assumed that I wouldn't notice, or figured that it had no choice but to attempt it even if I did.

Either way, it looked like I had enough time to finish what I'd come to do before it healed.

"Shuria, I'm here today because I wanted to hand you a sort of offer."

I absorbed the magical energy I poured into the [Heart Flame Ghost Blade,] forced her off of me, and then turned to face her.

She ended up falling onto her hands and knees as I pushed her away.

"I've got a good idea of what that bitch did to you and I think I know exactly how you're feeling right now. You hate her. You want vengeance. You can't help but want to tear her apart with your own two hands, right?"

An expression of displeasure found its way onto her face the moment the words left my mouth. She glared at me, a murderous glint in her eyes, one I recognized and knew very well.

She was pissed, pissed that someone who knew nothing about her and her pains was acting like he understood her, pissed that someone was attempting to empathize with her even though they clearly couldn't.

"And I'm sure you feel the way about that demon over there. You want to be a part of its fall, its demise."

I hit the nail on the head. She and I had a lot in common, but we weren't accomplices, nor were we partners in crime. Although our backstories were near identical, we were incapable of truly feeling each other's pain.

And that would remain true regardless of how many conversations we had.

"But as you are now, you're powerless. You can't do anything to it regardless of how injured it is."

“I-I know, but I still—”

I interrupted her by sending a wave of magic-laced bloodlust in her direction, one powerful enough to attack her instincts and force her down with brute physical force.

“It’s a pity, but still the truth. At this rate, you won’t be able to do a thing, not to the demon, nor to Yumis. I’ll murder her in cold blood without allowing you even the slightest bit of involvement. I could care less about how you feel, or what she’s done to you. There’s no reason for me to yield anything to you.”

“Graaaaghhhh!”

Shuria leapt at me. She pushed herself to attack me even though I’d sent enough bloodlust her way to repel her.

The attack wasn’t one she’d thought through or planned. She simply lunged at me because she’d come to recognize me as a foe, someone that’d get in her way. To be frank, it was meaningless. There was no way she’d hit. I dodged her with ease, grabbed her by the back of her collar, dropped her to the ground, and pressed one of my feet against her back to restrain her.

“Rgghh... Get off of me...!”

“Do you know why you lost everything, Shuria? It’s because you lacked knowledge. You didn’t know what would happen because you were too naive to think far enough ahead, too green.”

“...”

“You were too lacking, both in strength and willpower. The world you live in is a horrible place. You can’t get by believing in it or its people’s kindness. What you need is doubt, a blanket of doubt that covers every last fibre of your being.”

“...ow already.”

“You tried too hard to believe in the people around you. You clung too hard to the concept of trust. And look at you now, look what it’s done. They played you for a fool, and only because you let them. You washed your own suspicions away and tricked yourself into thinking everything was fine, all because you wanted to think you could “trust” her. And that, that’s why you’re here right now. That’s why your life has become

a living hell. You weren't a bad person; you didn't do anything you shouldn't have. But it was still your fault. Here you are, at rock bottom, because you neglected your responsibilities, because you wanted to trust her."

"I know! I know that already, and I don't need you telling it to me!"

Her eyes blazed with a dark, fiery passion.

A pitch black conflagration had lit itself within her, one she had no idea how to expel.

"Hurts, doesn't it? How about this, I'll lift my foot if you swear that you'll give up on exacting vengeance."

"Fuck... off!! Yumis, that two faced whore, is my prey!"

"I'll get you out of here if you give up on her. I really do feel sorry for you, so I'll even give you some cash. You can find a place for yourself out in the countryside and live the rest of your life out in peace."

"Screw off! How's that any different from being dead!?"

Madness filled her voice as she continued.

"I'm going to kill her. I'm going to fucking murder her! I'd much rather die than forget about all the pain she's caused!"

Shuria loosed an almost bestial shout, a proclamation that she'd much rather die than be deprived a chance to take her vengeance.

All reason had left her.

Her scream hadn't contained even the slightest bit of rationality.

Her tantrum was almost like that of a newborn's. Within it was the unshakeable will to live, to truly live.

No, it wasn't like a newborn's.

It was a newborn's.

Her cry had signified the birth of an insurgent, a renegade with naught but her own desires at heart.

“I see.”

She rolled to the side, bared her fangs, and bit at my leg without even the slightest shred of hesitation the moment I lifted it off her back.

There was no more fear in her, only strength.

“You sure are a reckless one, huh?”

“Why... aren’t you fighting back?”

At first, she was suspicious of my complete lack of resistance, but her jaws eventually began to slacken.

“Because I deserved it. It was just for confirmation sake, but still. I spouted a bunch of annoying bullshit at you, and I know it.”

“...”

She continued to stare at me in an attempt to figure out my intentions, her eyes filled with suspicion.

“Have you already forgotten the first thing I said? I’m here to recruit you, Shuria.”

“Re... cruit...?”

“Exactly.”

I squatted down in front of her now that she’d finally stopped struggling, and looked her straight in the eyes.

“You said you would rather die than forget your vengeance. And so, Shuria, I have an offer for you.”

I extended a hand towards her.

“Would you like to be reborn, here and now?”

I paused for a moment before elaborating.

“Won’t you join me down vengeance’s path?”

Chapter 22

A Demon's Temptations (2)

It felt like I was thrown into the midst of a nightmare. Everything I thought I had was taken away from me—no, that isn't quite right. I was forced to realize that I never had anything to begin with. It'd all just been an illusion, a hallucination I happened to be able to touch. And today, I'd finally learned the truth. Coming to understand my own circumstances had already made today the worst day of my life. But the day had yet to end. And neither had my suffering.

Losing everything I had—and everything I'd thought I had—was only a turning point. His words, my supposed saviour's words, only tortured me all the more.

"It's a pity, but still the truth. At this rate, you won't be able to do a thing, not to the demon, nor to Yumis. I'll murder her in cold blood without allowing you even the slightest bit of involvement. I could care less about how you feel, or what she's done to you. There's no reason for me to yield anything to you," Kaito sneered.

I leapt at him. It wasn't a conscious action, but rather, something my body had simply happened to do. The sheer amount of hatred coursing through my veins had forced me to action, to attack.

But I was powerless.

He evaded my pathetically weak attempt at a lunge, knocked me to the floor, and suppressed me by placing a foot on my back.

"Hurts, doesn't it? How about this, I'll lift my foot if you swear that you'll give up on exacting vengeance." He spoke in an overbearing, know-it-all like tone as he pointed out all my weaknesses and forced me to face everything I'd tried to avert my eyes from. "I'll get you out of here if you give up on her. I really do feel sorry for you, so I'll even give you some cash. You can find a place for yourself out in the countryside and live the rest of your life out in peace."

The combination of his smirk and the preposterous words he spoke made him look exactly like an evil sorcerer taken straight out of a fairytale. But the offer he made was

the opposite of enticing. It was something that, as far as I was concerned, held no value whatsoever.

The life I used to live was one I could no longer go back to. It'd already been shattered, destroyed, spirited away to a place beyond my grasp.

Quietly living out the rest of my days was downright impossible.

"I see," he said in a gentler tone as he removed his foot from my back. Looking up, I noticed that his face was now decorated with an ever so slight smile. The heavy, intimidating air that'd surrounded him just a moment prior had vanished. And only then did I finally realize that he wasn't a spirit—but I didn't care.

He would steal my prey if I didn't do something to stop him. Both the people I wanted to kill, to enact vengeance on, would be taken away from me. That alone, I couldn't permit. I would much rather die than yield.

And for that reason, I assaulted him again. I opened my jaws and sank my teeth into his leg

I knew I was going to fail. He was once again going to dodge my miserable excuse of an attack and step on me. And this time, he was probably going to kill me.

It was only a given. I rejected his aid and met his kindness with hostility. There was no reason for him not to kill me with the way I'd turned down his offer.

He'd completely overwhelmed a demon. There was no way someone like me could so much as scratch him, let alone beat him in a fight. Yet, I still chose to attack him.

Because I had no other choice.

Because I myself had decided that revenge was all I had left.

I'd already given up once. I'd accepted my death as an inevitability. But the moment that'd happened, I realized I didn't want to die. And for that reason, I decided. I wanted revenge, and I would attempt to take it regardless of how likely or unlikely I was to succeed.

"Why... aren't you fighting back?" I asked.

I didn't think it'd be possible for me to hurt him, but, for some odd reason, my attack had damaged him. At first, I'd seriously tried to bite into his flesh and tear it apart. But soon, my jaws began to slacken. I realized that, for reasons unknown, Kaito had decided not to avoid or resist me in any which way.

"Because I deserved it. It was just for confirmation sake, but still. I spouted a bunch of annoying bullshit at you, and I know it." He responded in way that left me taken aback.

Recovering from the shock, I looked him dead in the eye, only to find that his gaze was lightless. His pupils seemed to contain a sort of endless darkness, much like that of a bottomless abyss.

It was precisely that gaze of his that prompted me to look at him, not just as someone out to poach my prey, but as a person; his eyes caused me to take interest in him.

"Have you already forgotten the first thing I said? I'm here to recruit you, Shuria," he said with a smile.

"Re... cruit...?" I questioned.

"Exactly," he replied. His one word response had been accompanied by such a wide range of emotions that it almost seemed to reverberate its way into my head. It seemed to sneak its way into every last nook and cranny of my brain as I digested his words. But before I could, he added even more. "You said you would rather die than forget your vengeance. And so, Shuria, I have an offer for you."

"Would you like to be reborn, here and now?" Kaito smiled demonically as he whispered. "Won't you join me down vengeance's path?"

His hand looked exceedingly human, but I was sure that taking it was no different from taking a demon's, for his offer was as tempting as would be a forbidden fruit.

"Join... you...?" I repeated his words under my breath.

The words were so alluring that I felt like taking his hand would cause me to plunge into the darkness of the abyss.

"Would you rather be an observer? Or join me as an accomplice? Make your choice, here and now. If you take my hand, then I'll give you the power you need to exact the vengeance you desire, but accepting that power will take you beyond the point of no

return. You'll be forced to continue your quest for vengeance and shoulder all the grudges I bear, even after Yumis' death. The contract you'll make with me runs deeper than blood, no joke. If you die, then I'll die. And if I die, then you'll die," Kaito elaborated. His words almost seemed to come from really far away; they were all blurred together and extremely difficult to make out.

I was convinced that the person before me was a true demon, the kind that tempted people and led them astray in fairytales.

But as far as I was concerned, that was perfectly okay.

"I don't care about all that extraneous detail. There's only one thing I want to know. Will taking your hand allow me to see her suffer? Will I be able to see her expression twist in indignation and resentment?" I asked. I only cared about getting my revenge. I didn't care whether I had to do it alone or if I had to work with an accomplice. All that mattered was that I would be able to carry it out. And that was why the only thing I wanted to know was whether or not taking his hand would allow me to achieve my goal.

"Did I not make myself clear? I said I was giving you a chance to become one of my accomplices. Therefore, the question shouldn't be 'will I see her,' but 'can I make her?' I've pretty much said this already, but, you decide," Kaito paused for a moment before continuing. "Pick your own future. Choose your own fate. I won't make any guarantees, nor will I only only show you the conveniences that come with siding with me."

"You really are a like a demon," I said indignantly. "You're enticing me to join you without any words of comfort, nor even a guarantee of success. You're basically not doing anything for me at all."

"Well, I'm sure you already know all about just how much it can hurt you to leave something entirely in someone else's hands," he countered my complaint by hitting me right where it hurt. His lips curved upwards even though his expression seemed far too dark to be entertaining a smile—an expression I was sure I shared.

Though he wasn't doing much of anything at all, the hand he had extended symbolized an offer that could give me everything I could ever want. I was sure that taking his hand would turn me into a demon, just like him.

So I accepted. "Fine. I'll offer you my body, heart, and soul if you make me into a demon,

just like you. I don't care what happens, as long as accepting will take me even one step closer to getting my revenge."



“Fine. I’ll offer you my body, heart, and soul if you make me into a demon, just like you. I don’t care what happens, as long as accepting will take me even one step closer to getting my revenge.” The hand I had extended was gripped by a smaller, paler one as Shuria acknowledged my offer.

Wait, did she just tell me to make her a demon?

“Damn, you’re harsh. First you called me a ghost, then a spirit, and now a demon? For the record, I’m only human.” I grinned as I pulled Shuria to her feet. I let go of her hand as soon as she got up and summoned in it the dagger the Holy Sword of Vengeance used to establish its contracts.

“A regular human being wouldn’t be able to make take on a form made entirely out of mana. Nor would they be capable of making a dagger that ominous out of nothing but mana,” she retorted.

“Well, this sword’ll probably be able to answer about half your questions. I’ll answer the other half later, when we have more time,” I said.

A dark light that burned more brightly than the sun filled our sights the moment I handed Shuria the Holy Sword of Vengeance, a clear sign that she was more than qualified to use it.

“How strange. The light’s cold, hot, dark, and bright at the same time,” Shuria remarked.

Her eyes filled with a deep, red glow as she stared at the blade she’d been given. Black sparks radiated off its blade, as if it was both giving a cynical blessing to the girl holding it and urging her to set out on vengeance’s path. She brought the sword to her chest as she would a something she treasured—and drilled it into her body. But despite that, there wasn’t even the slightest trace of a wound.

“Grggghhhh...” I groaned. Second hand knowledge began flowing into me, just as it’d done when Minnalis and I had made our contract; I felt another person’s passion and hatred enter me. It was already my second time feeling the sensation, but it felt strange and foreign regardless. I couldn’t hold back the sheer amount of negativity that suddenly flowed through my mind no matter of how hard I tried; it eventually made its way onto my face and distorted it in rage. By the time it stopped, by the time the

blade finally ceased glowing altogether, Shuria's thirst for vengeance had become one with my own.

"Ugh, that really is way different from just talking to someone and sympathizing with them," I complained.

"Wow. I really didn't think I'd run into anyone with circumstances similar to my own so quickly," Shuria mused as she made an expression comprised of a mix of distaste and resignation. "That was a really strange sensation... but it looks like I've obtained an incredible ability."

She clenched and unclenched her fists several times as she observed her surroundings. A delighted expression appeared on her face a few moments later.

"And I think I've found just the thing I need to make it work," she said. "He'll be just perfect for commemorating my new skill's first use."

The elf-like girl slowly trudged her way over to a stuffed cat. She crouched as she reached it and picked it up by placing her hands around its stomach. And then, she began to chant.

Mr. Cat, Mr. Cat, where are you?

The clock breaks in the country full of kindness

The ice cracks in the country full of cold

Right this way, Mr. Cat. I know you're lost.

You'll find a tasty snack right over there.

Thread Spinner Dance — Puppet's Spiritual Possession

Glowing particles dyed in red, yellow, and black began to rise off the ground and illuminate Shuria's vicinity as she sang to activate a peculiar sort of spell. Her magical formula pumped the doll full of magical energy, and as the amount reached its apex, the particles that'd appeared around her did as her mana had and suit and entered the stuffed toy.

"Nnn... I feel really unsteady. I must be mana drunk... kyaha, kyahahahaha!" She laughed as she spoke to the stuffed toy, "now, get right up!"

The cat reacted to Shuria's voice. It twitched several times, gave itself a shake, and got to its feet.

“Huh, that’s a pretty interesting ability you ended up getting,” I said.

“It’s only going to get even more interesting from here on out,” she giggled.

The smile on Shuria’s face was a happy one, but the rest of her expression seemed to indicate that she’d fallen into delirium. Even so, the cat she’d empowered didn’t mind. It simply looked up at her and gave her a refine bow. Seeing that, Shuiria smiled again and issued it a command. “Okay! Here’s your first order. Go consume that pitiful clown. Make sure you get a good taste of him while you’re at it.”

The cat’s lips curved up into a smile. “*Nishishi Nishishishishishi!*” It responded her instructions by both laughing and nodding simultaneously. The fork and knife it held clinked against the floor over and over as it walked its way over to the demon that’d watched us throughout the contractual process.

I’d originally intended on killing it myself, but I thought it’d be too unrefined of me to cut in now of all times, so I took a step back and decided to play the role of an observer instead.

“S-Shit! What the fuck are you people!?” The demon screamed. It had managed to regenerate about half its body, but it was out of time. Knowing that, it put on one final struggle by decreasing its density so it could complete its form. It tried its best to escape, and it would have, had the stuffed animal retained its original pace.

Shuria’s puppet kicked off the ground and leapt towards its prey the moment it attempted to run.

“Stay away! I refuse to let you take me for a fool!” The demon swung its arms to swat the stuffed animal out of the air.

But to no avail.

“Nishishii!” The stuffed animal laughed, mocking the demon as blade suddenly grew several times larger.

“W-What!?” The demon’s eyes widened in shock and panic as the enlarged knife cleaved its arm right off, but soon calmed down and even laughed in relief as it realized that its assailant’s blade lacked the Heart Flame Ghost Blade’s ability. **“Hah... hahaha... Whew. It doesn’t look like it’s the same as the sword from earlier. I can regenerate immediately if all it does is cut me.”**

But his respite was brief.

“You do know I told it to eat, right?” Shuria smiled as if entertained.

The demon didn’t get the chance to finish processing her words before the stuffed cat executed its orders.

“*Nishishishii!*” Again, it laughed as it stuck its fork into the demon’s disembodied arm and cut a piece of it off with the knife, which had returned to its regular size. And with the most natural motion, it raised its fork to its face and consumed the demon’s flesh.

“Huh...?” The unholy spirit stared, dumbfounded. Its mental facilities lacked the ability to allow it to react before the stuffed cat consumed the rest of its arm. **“Oi, you’re kidding, right...? That thing just ate... my arm!?”**

“Kyahahaha! Is something wrong? You’ve got a really funny look on your face.” Shuria mocked.

As of resonating with its matter’s sadistic urges, the cat turned towards the demon and brandished its fork and knife against one another twice instead of answering its question. The sound that came from it was the usual “*Nishishi.*”

“Fuck!! Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuck! What the hell!? You have to be fucking kidding me! First, a sword that can cut something made entirely out of mana, and now a stuffed animal that can consume me!? This is just plain unfair! What the fuck!?” The demon complained, ridiculing the situation it was stuck in.

“Pffft.” I couldn’t help but laugh. “Did a demon really just complain about something being unfair?” I’d originally been intending on totally staying out of this, but the demon’s words were so silly that I couldn’t resist making a remark.

“I’m a demon goddamit! Unlike you fools, I’m a higher form of life! This shouldn’t be happening to me! No! No no no no no no no!” The demon screamed as it fought back against the stuffed animal, but it failed to provide any significant resistance. It was completely outmatched.

The demon lacked proficiency in close quarters combat. It could no longer rely on its ability to regenerate either, and so, it panicked. It lacked the composure it needed to cast any complicated spells, so it ended up randomly throwing out weaker ones. But again, to no avail. All its attacks were either dodged or intercepted by the stuffed

animal's fork.

Though the demon was immune to pain, it did still feel fear. For that reason, it simply sat there as it was eaten, paralyzed by its own lack of mental fortitude.

Its body was consumed from the extremities, and soon, all that was left of the demon was its head.

"How... How could I, a demon, get done in by *that* sort of inferior life form? It's not even sure whether it's a human or elf!" Knowing its eventual demise, the demon moaned resentfully. There was so little of its mana left that it was already beyond repair. It wouldn't have been able to heal itself even it took in all the mana around it. Its fate was sealed; it was going to die.

"How boring..." Shuria sighed. "Why did you have to lose so easily? I wanted you to struggle more and hold on a bit longer so using my new powers for the first time would have felt more special and exciting."

"Well, Yumis is next, so you can just think of this whole event as a something along the lines of a prologue that ended up dragging on for too long." I shrugged.

"I guess you're right... In that cause, I'll should probably end it now." Shuria squat herself down right in front of the demon and kindly smiled as she issued her stuffed cat one last order. "I'll watch every last moment of the demon's demise. So dig in, Mr. Cat."

"Fuuuuuck yoooooooooooooooooooo!" The demon cursed at the girl that proclaimed she would enjoy its death, its voice filled with hatred and rage.

"Kyahahahahahaha!"

"Nishishi!"

Though faced with the demon's bare hostility, both she and her puppet only laughed in response.

The stuffed animal stabbed its knife into one of the demon's eyes and its fork into the other, consuming both before chucking the evil spirit's head into the air and skillfully catching it in its mouth.

After swallowing, Mr. Cat huffed, as if satisfied before once again tapping the two utensils together. The demon episode had finally reached its conclusion—or so I thought.

The moment the situation calmed, something happened, both to the cat, and to Shuria herself. The stuffed animal, which, at first, had mostly been pure white, was the first to change. Swirling black patterns suddenly coiled themselves all over the cat's body and turned it into a black and white tabby.

Likewise, change also began taking place in the puppet's master.

"Hm...? My body suddenly feels really warm. It's like I'm burning up." Shuria blinked curiously as she examined herself. The change in her temperature was a cause for concern, but I was much less worried about it than I was worried about the pitch black magical energy that'd suddenly started swirling around her body.

"Shit! Are you alright!?" I fretted. We were bound by the Holy Sword of Vengeance's contract. Minnalis and I would both be in some deep shit if Shuria died.

"I think I should be fine. It doesn't feel like I'm in any danger. My body just feels like it's burning hot," Shuria answered. Though the situation was abnormal, she remained quite calm. It didn't look like she was at risk of losing her life. In fact, the heat wasn't even causing her any pain or suffering.

After a few moments passed, the magical vortex eventually began to slow; our warped surroundings were allowed to return to their prior state.

"Well, this is unexpected," I commented.

"Did I just... transform?" Shuria questioned as she looked over her own body.

Her soft, porcelain white skin had strengthened itself and turned into a milk chocolate-like light brown, while her pretty blonde hair had lost all its colour and turned a shade of silver. The torn parts of her clothes revealed that her abdomen was now covered in dark, tattoo-like markings.

シュリア

「月を眺めるのはまたあとにするのです。
きつと、赤い血はこの空によく映えるのですよ」



She lifted a bit of her hair to the flame, and found that it reflected the fire's colour and shone with an orange hue.

The change that occurred within her seemed to be a side effect of her intaking the demon's mana.

"Whew, you didn't end up becoming a demon." I remarked. "It looks like you've become something along the lines of a dark elf instead."

"Dark elf?" She asked.

"That's what the people back in my world call elves with skin like yours." I explained.

Elves weren't too rare a race. In fact, there were quite a few in town. Many of the race's members would take advantage of their inherent talent in magic and become adventurers. But I'd never actually seen any elves with dark skin, not even before everything was reset. I'd been convinced that they simply didn't exist, but evidently, I was wrong.

I looked over Shuria's stats and confirmed that she was no longer a human with elven traits, and that she'd obtained a brand new innate ability.

=====

Name: Shuria

Age: 14

Gender: Female

Race: Dark Elf

HP: 292/332

MP: 780/780 Transferring (525)

Level: 33

Strength: 133

Vitality: 213

Stamina: 154

Agility: 288

Magic Power: 679

Magic Resistance: 582

Innate Abilities

- Scarlet Eyes
- Puppet's Spiritual Possession

Skills

- Presence Detection: Lv 1
- Presence Concealment: Lv 1
- Meditation: Lv 3
- Dismantling: Lv 3

Condition: Good

=====

=====

Name: Shuria

Hidden Stats

Technique: E

Thinking and Reaction Speed: E

Rate of Physical Recovery: F

Current Status: Healthy

Magical Affinities

- Fire: 0
- Water: 0
- Wind: 0
- Earth: 0
- Light: 0
- Dark: 0
- Null: 21
- Non-Systematic: 154

Titles

- One With Re-emerged Elven Roots
- Accursed One
- The Avenger's Subordinate
- Possessed Puppet Manipulator
- Fallen Elf

=====

ステータス



シュリア

Lv33

Shuria

14 歳 女
ダークエルフ

HP : 292/332 MP : 780/780 譲渡中 (525)

筋力 : 133 体力 : 213

耐久 : 194 敏捷 : 288

魔力 : 679 魔耐 : 582

固有技能 : 『緋の瞳』 『傀儡憑代』

ス キ ル : 『気配察知 Lv1』 『気配隠蔽 Lv1』

『水術魔法 Lv1』 『風術魔法 Lv1』

『瞑想 Lv3』 『剥ぎ取り Lv3』

状 態 : 良好

ステータス

シュリア

Shuria

隠しステータス

技巧 : E

思考反応速度 : E

身体回復速度 : F

状態 : 健常

魔法適性

炎系統適性 : 0 光系統適性 : 0

水系統適性 : 0 闇系統適性 : 0

風系統適性 : 0 無系統適性 : 21

地系統適性 : 0 系統外適性 : 154

獲得称号

エルフ返り 呪いを定着せし者 復讐者の従属者

傀儡憑代の繰り手 悪に堕ちたエルフ

“It doesn’t look like you’re in any danger, so I’d say we’re in the green,” I concluded as I looked over her stat page.

“A dark elf, huh...? I like it. It makes me feel like I really was reborn,” Shuria smiled, accepting her new form.

With that out of the way, I informed Shuria it was time to go. “Alright, the demon’s dead, so let’s get the hell out of here. I may or may not have forced Yumis’ barrier a slight bit to get inside, so she’ll probably be back before long.”

I even moved towards the dungeon’s exit, but Shuria told me to wait before I reached it. “Please give me just a few moments. I want to free everyone.”

She gave a few orders to her now marbled cat plush and had it eliminate all the undead.

Undead creatures were technically immortal, but you could turn them to dust and return them to the earth if you damaged their bodies enough and whittled away at the magical energy they used to sustain themselves. She did exactly that for all the undead locked up in the prison.

“Alright, let’s hurry up and leave. We’ve got a lot of stuff to talk about, and a very finite amount of time to get it all covered,” seeing that she was done, I urged her to leave.

“Mkay.” Shuria turned back one last time as she reached the staircase. “I swear I’ll make her pay. I’ll make her suffer more than enough to make up for everything she made you go through.”

Her dark, passionate words were met with silence, for all the creatures within the dungeon had already ceased their groaning. With that said, Shuria ascended the stairs, her black and white stuffed cat following right behind her.

=====

Puppet’s Spiritual Possession

Skill Level: 2

Sacrifices a portion of the caster’s max MP in order to give an inanimate object false life and turn it into the caster’s servant. The servant’s abilities depend on the amount

of mana sacrificed, the emotions embedded into it, and the caster’s environment.

The maximum amount of MP that can be sacrificed is equivalent to the caster’s max MP. The number of autonomous servants that can be created is equal to twice the skill’s level. The number of manually controlled servants the caster can deploy and use at once is based off of their own talents. If an autonomous servant consumes one of many specific types of organism, then the caster will absorb the organism’s magical energy. This can happen once per species. The caster’s species race can change if the newly absorbed individual had more mana than the caster.

[[? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?]]

[[? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?]]

Absorption List

Demon (Eaten)

=====

Side Story

Diary Of A Certain Mage

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

Recently, I've reached a bit of a standstill in my magic tool research.

I know the reason, of course. It's because my talent in magic is lacking.

I never could use too much mana in one go, but I made up for it by perfecting my control and raising the efficiency as high as possible. However, that too wasn't enough anymore. Perhaps with my mana plateauing, my ambitions would go unfulfilled. No, it's too soon to give up.

I must carve my name onto the town monument.

If I can't, my father, who was still gentle to me, would no longer allow my current lifestyle.

Wait for me, Sori. One day, I will proudly...

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

Another failure today.

Even using the wind element, for which I had the most talent, my output is only slightly higher than average. I've also come to feel that raising my level anymore would be difficult around these parts.

My mana capacity will slowly, but surely rise if I put in the required level of training, but I had no time.

It was fine for now, but sooner or later, an engagement proposal would come that would effectively tear me away from Sori.

I must do something before then...

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

This time, I tried changing my methods.

The control became more difficult, but there was a clear improvement in effect. But even then, I fundamentally needed more mana to make a tool worthy of putting my name on the monument.

To have my name immortalized on the monument, I must make a tool acknowledged by the great spirit dwelling within said monument. Once I could make such an item and placed it on the designated podium, my name would be automatically engraved on the stone.

What must I do to make such a powerful magic tool?

I'm sorry, Sori, please forgive my incompetency.

It seems we must wait a bit longer before we can truly be together.

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

Today, people of a company in Elmia visited the institute. They were interested in some of my experimental tools.

They told me that these would sell well on the market, but my goal was clearly not becoming an inventor. I'm not petty enough to be satisfied selling lesser tools for pocket change.

But still, research required funds, and it was all the better the more money I could freely use. So I ended up taking their offer.

I hadn't realized back when I made the deal, but as I'm writing now, I understand that it was a significant move forward.

If my name spreads and my fame becomes known, even if slightly, when the time comes that I will have my name on the monument, my father might just find it harder to ignore my personal wishes.

The founder of my house had apparently decreed, "One who achieves the honor of carving their name on the monument of Elmia shall have their any wish granted", which was fine and all, but realistically speaking, there was no guarantee that it'd be upheld today.

Sori, she was so cute today.

Her calling my name with rose tinted cheeks absolutely gave me shivers.

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

Today, a dubious merchant called out to me.

Elmia was a town of many walks of people, people of his walk being especially common.

Normally, I would politely refuse any offers and be on my way, but somehow today, I ended up listening.

But then, among the things the merchant displayed, I spotted something outrageous.

A demonic summoning stone.

The merchant hadn't a clue about the value of such a product. I bought the stone that he was selling dirt cheap, and quickly made my way home.

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

The outfit I'd secretly ordered arrived today.

Having Sori wear it looked quite sexy indeed. So it's true that your whole impression of a person changes in different clothing. This was a tremendous find. Ah~, what ever shall I have her wear next?

Honestly, just why can't girls love other girls? It wasn't my aim for the masses to recognize my desired relationship.

But I would very much like my dear father and mother to give their blessings on my choice.

The merchant I had a personal contract with knew of my relationship with Sori and kept quiet about it, but if other merchants found out...

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

Today, after thoroughly researching and preparing on it, I tried summoning a demon. Demons were a subset of spirits. In exchange for a large offering, they would grant one cursed knowledge or power.

So when I asked it if there was a way I could offer the life of a slave in exchange for better talent in magic, the demon simply replied, “There is”.

This method involved using a specialized magic circle, and placing an individual of the same blood within for a long period of time. This would allow me to plunder that individual’s talent.

Ah, the Lord has shown me the way.

Someone with high talent for magic, someone blood related to me, and someone who I can easily keep in one place for a long time.

I happen to know that someone.

A child born between my father and a servant, my half-sister.

Her name, if I’m recalling correctly, should be Shuria.

I could at last see hope.

This would surely lead Sori and I to our happily ever after.

Once I told her about the plan, and that the day of our matrimony would be soon, Sori was so happy.

Sori was so cute and lovely, asking if there was anything she could do to help. We went at it for 3 rounds today.

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

The plan was working.

Lady Luck was my ally. I had come to Shuria’s rescue in saving her little sister at the perfect timing, and successfully lured her into the mansion.

As the demon had requested, I had also made the special magic circle, and provided the special mana for its activation more or less at the same time.

During my expedition, I also managed to acquire some experimental subjects, making

it look as if they'd been caught and killed by devilkin.

Next, I just needed to make sure that foolish sister of mine doesn't exit her room.

Right now, she was still in possession of MY talent. I can't have her use that to destroy the magic circle in her room. And were she to even leave that room, I would have to once again prepare offerings to the demon to restart the process.

There weren't many villages so insular and convenient like the one I'd used. Plus, I doubt I could use the same excuse of, "The devilkin did it...", anymore.

Until the spell reaches 100%, I suppose I must act the part of kind elder sister.

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

This is important.

On days when I came to act my good sister part, Sori would be tremendously more agitated as if she was burning in jealousy.

Sori was of noble blood, but she was from a lower branch family, and would normally act appropriate as a maid. That also went for our bedroom activities, she simply insisted on keeping a stoic expression.

That Sori was showing her possessive nature towards me like never before. It makes me wet just thinking about it.

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

Today, a letter came from my parents living in the capital. The contents were about whether I was interested in an engagement and what not, so I burned it with a flame spell, leaving no trace of the parchment.

My parents quite liked their life in the capital and would rarely come home to Elmia. Once I'd gotten a handle on my duties as lord of this land, they'd fully relocated. It's been 4 years since then.

The town's administration still being handled by our hired officials, my job was to

simply stamp the lord's seal on the documents, easy work.

Still, perhaps they'd grown worried as I refused every engagement proposal that came my way, so the number of letters such as the previous have increased.

Ah~, I want to quickly get my name on that monument, and bind with Sori in holy matrimony.

.....

.....

...

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

The spell's effects were showing.

Shuria's proficiency in magic was being transferred to me, it was happening so easily that all my hard work prior seemed idiotic.

My own skill level in magic also increased by one during the past half year.

And now that my capacity for mana outflow had risen greatly, I could make much more complicated and controlled experiments. I'm certain that at this rate, I can one day create a magic tool that would go down in the tomes of history.

Now, I planned to train further in my control, and simply wait for the spell to complete.

.....

.....

...

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

It was almost done.

Perhaps I should start thinking in more detail about phase 2 of the plan that I would enact after the spell reached completion.

First matter of business: Shuria's Scarlet Eyes.

They'd be perfect. I should use those eyes of hers to make a perception based magic tool.

I clearly had a gift for this, so the mana wouldn't lose any efficiency. I'm sure that unlike those sub-par experiments, I could make her a fine undead.

.....

.....

...

Year # > #

○ month, ×△ day

The spell was practically done.

Thinking back, it'd actually taken quite the length of time.

It just means that I'd stolen that much more talent from the little girl.

And by the morning of tomorrow, all of that talent would be mine alone.

I'd have her aid me quite a bit in the days to come, so I suppose I could extend her sweet dream to the end of tomorrow. I am her kind elder sister after all.

◇ ◇ ◇

"I see, so it was like this"

I kept myself as calm as I could manage as I finished and closed Yumis' diary.

—— —... So trivial.

It was so trivial, so minor, so petty, so damn insignificant.

Yumis, are you saying THIS was the reason you were so intent on your magic tools?
THIS was the reason you betrayed me?

Having the town monument recognize her magic tool, and boldly take her favorite maid as wife?

Just for that, she betrayed me. Just for that, she used Shuria, and piled up so many sacrifices.

"...Alright, I thought that she only cared for the maid, but it looks like she's quite attached to her parents and other servants too. I'll make use of them on my stage"

I put the diary back exactly as it was, and pleased with the find that will serve to further fuel my vengeance, I left Yumis' mansion.

Chapter 23

The Hero And Shuria, First Steps

“Ukh, AAH!”

Ah, it’s that same dream.

Despite knowing it to be a dream, the scenes happening before me were truly horrendous.

“Hey there, it’s time for your daily dose. Be still and don’t spill any now”

“Khu, this is, NOTHING!! I will never surrender to you fiends...!”

“Well, I don’t care. You also played a part in tricking me. That, is all that matters”

I could see around me, something of a dark cave. Lit by luminescent moss along the walls, I could see a large rock that appeared to have been cut flat across the top and used as a makeshift bed. And on top of this bed lay Sori.

Her arms and legs were bound in crude iron shackles like those of a slave.

And a girl, Shuria, as the dream would have me believe, was approaching Sori with a calm smile on her face.

But that Shuria looked all-together different from the one I knew. Her hair had gone from blond to a silver close to pure white, while her skin, that’d been ghostly pale, had been tanned brown like that of the people living in lands loved by the sun.

The only familiar features I could see were her face, that had maintained the same shape, and her deep, red eyes.

Every time I had this dream, I saw a black haired, black eyed boy, who somehow roused a sense of deja vu, by her side, along with what appeared to be a rabbit-kin girl with chestnut hair.

Shuria had forcefully pried open Sori's mouth with a gag, and shoved a spoonful of yellow-green liquid into her.

And anticipating that the maid would choke it out, she would then close Sori's mouth and make her swallow.

"Nha, oww, cough, cough!!"

The task done, Shuria violently pulled off the gag.

"Okay then, since we finished up your arms yesterday, let's do, your left leg today"

"Here you are"

"Thanksies"

Shuria received a number of stakes from the rabbit-kin girl. These black stakes were hollow with a hole on the top and were of a design that let their sharp tips open to let things through.

I, truly wanted to avert my eyes from seeing the atrocity that I knew was about to transpire, but this dream didn't allow me such an action.

"Hggghh!? Uuu, aaAAAAA!!!"

Sori's beautiful leg was brutally pierced right before my eyes.

"Aahh, Nhh, UAah!!"

My beloved raised shrill screams as another 3 of those stakes impaled her.

Those screams, they almost sounded like the sweet moans she made as I played with her in the night.

"My gosh, Sori, are you actually feeling good from this? Such a pervert, you"

'kusukusu', Shuria laughed in ridicule.

"Nhh, haah, that's, because of, the drug..."

“But it’s made so that you can still feel the pain you know. Which means that you’re clearly feeling more pleasure than pain from this. Okey, ready for the main event? Please be so kind as to not pass out like you did yesterday. If you aren’t suffering, all my time doing this feels wasted is all”

“Aiee!!”

Shuria now held a large bottle which contained a liquid, black something. This something that gave off a metallic sheen was, what I speculated to be, a magic creature, and this creature moved by Shuria’s commands.

She placed the bottle beside Sori, and slowly lifted its lid.

“Here, eat up dearie”

As Shuria called on it, that liquid black something oozed out of its bottle on its own, made towards the stakes freshly impaled into Sori, and entered through the holes on top.

“HNGGA!!”

This was likely when the tips of the stakes came open. The result was a new onslaught of screams.

“NnaaAAaA, Nggghh, Oooo, Aaanh, Nnh, Nh, Ah, Aaahh!!”

“You’re crying in so much ecstasy. You must be especially deplorable, gasping in sensual breaths while your bones are melting away”

“Yumis-sama! Yumis-sama!! YUMIS-SAMAAA!!!”

“The amount of pleasure she’s feeling should be just under what she feels as pain, so her poor head must be so confused”

“Oi oi, you make it sound like it’s none of your business, you made the poison”

“Oh geez, Goshujin-sama. Call it a drug, alright? She’d break so soon if all that was only pain. That’d be a waste”

While Sori screamed in mad agony, the black haired boy and the rabbit-kin girl were

having a pleasant chat.

I wouldn't spare a second to exterminate these three monsters if I could, but despite it being my dream, I was curiously unable to control my body.

Like always, I could simply watch, watch and do nothing as Sori moaned in pleasure and agony.



“!? Hah, haah, aah, that, dream again. What a horrid way to start the morning”

I sighed as I raised myself from bed, feeling my forehead drenched in sweat. Looking at the clock told me that I had woken up slightly later than usual.

“It’s been 4 times already. Just what is happening to me”

That day, the demonic summoning stone had turned into one without the first two descriptors, and from that day, I kept having that dream. That same dream, night after night.

The dream where a transformed Shuria, along with a couple of strangers, would torture Sori.

I kept seeing that terrifying premise that felt too real.

“That demon, after breaking it’s own contract, did it perhaps put a curse on me?”

On the day I pushed Shuria into my trap and offered her soul to the demon, after I’d enjoyed bed play with Sori well into the day, I noticed that glimmering black demonic gem had turned into an ordinary stone you could find at any roadside.

I’d quickly made my way to the building where I’d built my secret dungeon only to find that the place had been sacked. There was no demon, not a trace of Shuria’s corpse, and no sight of all those experimental undead.

I couldn’t even explain how the bars of the cage at the far back had, what clearly look like to have been sliced up.

For an instant, I’d thought Shuria might’ve done something, but I quickly dismissed it. That little girl’s magic was all mine by then, and she’d been powerless.

Since she had strong elven traits, without her magic, she’d actually be weaker than human children her age. She couldn’t possibly do something against a demon in that state.

Which meant that the demon likely used some means to break the contract, take Shuria, not just her soul, and even stole away all my undead, before sealing itself in

some other stone.

I seem to recall that after a demon's contractual period ends, they can then go on to possess any stone of their desire anywhere in the world.

"Haah," I sighed, "I must look terrible, I simply can't let Sori see me like this"

To calm myself, I drank a cup from the pitcher of water I have kept nearby, which is when Sori entered the room.

"Good morning, Yumis-sama. Your breakfast is ready"

"Thank you, Sori. Now, what do you say we enjoy it together"

"W-We mustn't, Yumis-sama. I am but a maid, to dine with my master would be improper"

"No need to worry about that, I've decided to have breakfast here in my room today, so you needn't be wary of any eyes. Please have them give me larger servings and we'll eat that together. I must admit, my appetite is a bit lacking today, so a little for me is fine"

I gleefully replied to my beloved maid.

I knew I was being a tad forceful, but Sori, after making a troubled expression, nodded, "I will bring it in immediately," and left the room.

Today, I just wanted to be with her as much as I could. I hadn't told her about my dreams of late. There's the fact that I didn't want to needlessly worry her, and also, these terrible dreams had no basis on reality.

Yet, there was an unfounded anxiety in me that I wanted to relieve even a little. Close to my goal I may be, I still needed a little more time for it to come to fruition.

"It really is too bad I couldn't get my hands on Shuria's eyes. And here I was, certain I could make those mana seeing Scarlet Eyes into an excellent magic tool"

There are many records of those in the past using eyes from dragons or greater ice wolves. With my new power, I could've used those scarlet eyes to make a magic tool that maybe, just maybe, would be recognized by the sacred monument.

How fiendish of that demon. Yes, it helped resolve my main issue, but then, it also took away the boon that was rightfully mine.

“Fine then. I’m sure that once I master my new talents in magic, I can eventually make something to satisfy the stone”

No use crying over spilled milk, lost items in this case. I should think forward, of my future and what’s to come.

“Right, it now seems a must that I go on a journey, for further training and item collection. I really have reached the level cap of this area, so rather than wait for them to come to me, I should go find those rare and powerful items myself”

This town might be a junction for many trade routes, but the better items sold for higher in the capital, and on top of that, better items had a tendency to gather in the empire rather than our kingdom.

The goods that did make their way here sufficed for experiments, but there was no telling how long I would have to wait for the type of goods that would please the monument.

Next, on what to do about my position as lord of this town. Father and mother were quite busy, making important connections in the capital, so it’d be awful if I simply left my duty... I should hire a governor for a time.

And then, there was the fact that I was the only child and daughter. I needed some way to convince father of my departure as well.

“Rumor has it that the demon lord has been gathering forces so, I guess the best course of action would be joining the party of a hero...”

That would give me plenty of just cause to proudly travel away from the fief, and not look like I abandoned my duties to pursue some hobby.

As a nobleman of the kingdom, I doubt father would oppose to the deed of aiding in the subjugation of the demon lord.

No, well, my father did value noble blood over all else, but in the worst case, if I died, he could try for another child, or employ any number of other methods.

I'm sure he'd consider his potential rise in prestige if his house is among those around the hero.

I recall hearing rumors of a summoning of said hero at the capital, I wonder what happened with that?

"Yumis-sama, I am bringing in the food"

Sori had returned as I was lost in thought.

She neatly transferred the dishes from the cart to the top of the dining table in my room.

"The menu today is baked pork sausage and poached cluck eggs with a side of white bread. For dessert, you have goat milk mixed with crushed portions of a sweet fruit called the straaberry"

"Thank you, my compliments to the chef"

We then heartfully enjoyed the meal, sometimes feeding one another, I made sure to tease Sori aplenty.

The juice for dessert, which we fed each other mouth to mouth by the way, was frighteningly sweet and delicious, I practically got addicted.

I could do this forever, but unfortunately, I had work, so I put on clothes more appropriate for such an outing.

"Nhh, if I recall, you had work at the government office today, I wish you a nice day, Yumis-sama"

"Thank you"

I was about to leave the room, but with my hand on the door knob, I suddenly recalled something.

"Pardon me, Sori, can I ask a favour?"

"? Yes, of course, Yumis-sama"

“Could you please lift up your skirt? Just up to your hips is fine”

“Eh!?”

Sori’s face instantly bloomed red.

As I kept staring silently, Sori, despite being embarrassed, grasped the hems of her long maid’s skirt and lifted.

“U-umm, Yumis-sama, is this to your liking?”

She exposed the contents within, revealing a clean pair of smooth and beautiful legs.

Her unblemished skin had not a trace of the wounds I’d seen on her in my dreams. Actually, I’d called her to sleep with me last night as well, and I know we were together right until we fell asleep, so the matters of my series of dreams taking place in reality was completely unfounded.

(...Why am I so worried, I’m clearly overthinking this)

I should get a priest to look at this nightmares condition I seem to have going.

That put aside, ah~, Sori, she was still holding that pose in a beet red face, it’s so lovely, I couldn’t get enough.

I took a plentiful helping of that sight for my sore eyes, and then left the mansion to fulfill my day’s duties at the office.

As far as I could tell, nothing was wrong.

I daydreamed about my joyful married life with sweet Sori as I walked to my destination.

◇ ◇ ◇

(Ahh, how long must I suffer this dream)

I kept having the same nightmares for multiple days after.

(This is around the time I usually wake up)

I'd thought that I should wake up now as I usually did after being shown the atrocities, but today, it ended differently.

"Now now, we're all ready now. Are you listening, foolish nee-sama? The show has only begun, and you've been dancing along the stage quite splendidly"

I, who'd always watched from a heightened view, was suddenly addressed by Shuria.

(!?)

Upon a direct view, I could see that her eyes were not of the brilliant red I knew, but a dark, corrupted, blood crimson.

I couldn't stand looking at that unpleasant stare. But like always, my will had no power in this dream.

"This isn't the end, I won't let it end. I'll be the one to close your curtain. So please enjoy, be sure to enjoy the show to your very fullest"

Her wide grin gave me chills, I could feel something cold slide down the length of my spine as I sprung up from bed.

Sori, I'd certainly called her to my bed yesterday, and ended up sleeping together.

I searched next to me in a panic, only to find her not there.

"Khshishi, khshishishishishi!"

"! Who's there!!"

My befuddled head could recognize the place I was in as my personal room.

No, there was a single incoherency.

On top of the table, there was a teddy bear, it's design, one of patchwork. I recalled that it was one of the 'carrots' Sori had prepared for Shuria.

I remembered instantly since it had such a unique design.

(Why is that thing here...)

“Khshi, Khshishi”

Surprisingly, it was that very same plushy that’d been uttering those sounds.

As if it was making a fool of me, the teddy bear made a clean bow before leaving behind a letter on the table while it swiftly jumped out the window.

“! WAIT!!”

By the time I quickly made my way to the windowsill chasing after the doll, when I spotted it, it’d gone quite a distance away, running across the rooftops.

I attempted to settle down my quickly rising sense of dread, and tried to get a handle on the situation.

The sealed red parchment on top of my table had the word Invitation written on top. Turning it the other way, it said, “From Shuria and an avenger you don’t know”.

Reading the contents on the envelope, I felt that the dreams I’d been seeing had connected to my reality.

“SORI! SORII!! Where are you, answer me, SORIII!!”

My yells yielded no response.

Other servants had come rushing in hearing my outcry, but none of them could answer me either.

That was the day that Sori disappeared from my home.

Chapter 24

The Hero And Shuria, Raise The Curtain

We looked through every nook and cranny of the mansion, all to no avail as to Sori's whereabouts. She wasn't even in her specially granted personal room.

Servants normally had shared rooms, but using her status as a minor noble, I'd gotten her her own room that made it easier to engage in some of our private rendezvous.

No one in the mansion had a clue as to when exactly Sori had disappeared.

(No, calm yourself, Yumis. Think back, we slept together in the same bed just last night. I distinctly remember Sori succumbing to exhaustion first and falling asleep before myself...)

"...My only clue is that damnable letter"

I still had that sealed envelop in hand.

The red dyeing the paper put off an awfully sinister impression.

But it might be my only lead in finding dear Sori.

Expecting the worst, I opened the letter.

Inside, there was my home's specialty light blue paper.

It was an audio letter.

"Hello, my dear Yumis nee-sama. The show starts tonight, the stage is set right after sundown. If you desire Sori's return, I highly suggest you come prepared. I shall have an escort waiting by the road out the eastern gate. Yours truly"

That jovial tone was undoubtedly that of Shuria's.

That natural intonation was dissimilar to the fraudulent mother and sister I'd made,

it was of a living, breathing person.

This instantly proved that Shuria was alive, and that those dreams weren't merely dreams.

"! WHY, why, is she alive...!"

I had a feeling about this. But my logical mind had denied it every time.

Impossible. How in the world could that frail little girl survive after losing all her magic?

Perhaps that demon, it aided her in this and... No.

There are many conditions needed before one could form a demonic contract. Even if the demon found itself wanting to, Shuria couldn't have forged a contract as she was.

And a demon is unable to do anything for anyone unless stipulated through such a contract. Conclusion: the demon wasn't helping her.

Which implied that the demon wouldn't have not taken her soul.

But the reality was that Shuria was alive, and had even had the gall to challenge me.

(No, that doesn't matter right now. I need to find Sori first and...!!)

"...Call in Ronbert"

After a short while, a large man with a rather vulgar feel to him appeared before me.

"You called, Miss?"

Among our land's military, I had 50 people under my direct control. A Special Forces unit, if you will, that took care of the dirty work.

These men were chosen from amongst retired mercenaries and adventurers who had previous experience in warfare, and were all adept to a certain degree and all convenient tools for narrow situations.

I used them to eliminate people who'd prove bothersome for my research, and also

those who snooped into my affairs. I had also used them to take Shuria's old village off the map.

They worked well enough, granted I provide the gold, and were especially useful for emergencies like today.

"Ronbert, I have a job for you"

"Aye aye, and about the pay..."

"You needn't worry, I have 1 gold for every man you have. Now quickly, go get all of them"

"All of'em?"

Ronbert's eyes shot open in surprise.

Most dirty work didn't require gathering everyone, assassination jobs needed 5, 6 of them at most. All other times, they were employed as my intelligence network.

But despite me knowing that my actions could be described as overkill, I wasn't in a state to consider bothering.

"Indeed, all of them. This job won't be your usual assassination. Sori's been kidnapped, we need to get her back"

"Why us then? Can't you get the guard corps to help with that?"

"If I did, I couldn't kill those miscreants right then and there, now could I? I would fucking tear them limb from limb right now if I could"

I replied in a narrow eyed glare, dense mana exuding from me as if spurred by my fury.

"Just ready the strongest team possible. By tonight"

"Roger that, Miss"

Ronbert, who now showed prime example of the phrase, 'silence is golden,' exited the room.

Now alone, I thought on my objectives.

“ ... ”

I didn't know too much.

Why was Shuria alive. What were those dreams.

No doubt the two were related, but Sori had acted perfectly normal even yesterday. I even made sure there weren't any signs of the supposed torture.

Outside, it was yet noon.

Various feelings gnawing at me, I carefully prepared to slaughter Sori's captor, who I'm led to believe is Shuria, and anyone affiliated with her.



Fully geared and ready for action, I, along with my special forces were gathered on the road outside the eastern gate.

The cover story would be that we were conducting a military exercise in the forest further east. As there had been reports of Redcaps appearing in the area, in addition to a number of mutilated monster corpses, there were already talks that a powerful irregular might've spawned.

Since we would be facing such a level of unknown danger, no one should find fault in me having every member of the subjugation corps equipped with the strongest full plate armor available.

Some time after, a certain thing approached our location.

“That's the...”

It was the very same stuffed animal that'd disappeared from my home as suddenly as it left that ominous letter. It arrived at a walking pace from the road due north-east that led to the aforementioned forest.

“Khshishi”

It stopped a ways away, and mockingly beckoned us over with a finger, before dashing off.

“Chase it”

“Aye”

We so ran after the accursed doll.

I felt the air prickling like needles on the skin of my face. But this was less the weather and more my utter lack of calm that must’ve been clearly reflected on my face and expression.

We hadn’t a clue on the enemy’s strength, and further had an important hostage held against us. On top of that, there suddenly appeared a self-moving doll that may or may not be some new breed of monster.

My dealings with the underworld had taught me that death was closely linked to the amount of information one had, and thus I’d cautioned the troops to be on guard for a surprise attack from anywhere.

We’d reached the forest, and walked further deep for another 1 hour. There, we saw them.

“Good evening, Yumis nee-sama. And also the rest of you gentlemen, one and all, welcome to this wonderous show”

A voice, clear as a bell.

Like how the horizon separated land and sky, the forest suddenly gave way to a large circular plane, it’s surface bearing neither grass nor weed, as if proclaiming its designation as the field of battle.

At the center of this arena, there was a withered tree devoid of any leaves and upon a thick branch of that tree sat 3 individuals.

One of those 3 was a little girl. Her silver hair swayed in the night wind and she had on something like a black one-piece dress. It was that sinisterly smiling girl that’d spoken.

“Shuria... Are you Shuria?”

“That I am, Yumis nee-sama. It appears I hadn’t quite died, and have been reborn wonderfully as you can see”

‘kusukusu,’ laughed the little girl exceedingly unlike the one I’d known.

Her cherubic expression and the distinct air around her made her seem a complete stranger.

Her facial features and voice had seemed familiar before, but as I now saw her in person, I could tell that those too had changed ever so slightly.

The way she looked under this moonlit night, with a finger on her lips to emphasize her words, she appeared to exude a charm like that of a succubus.

She had not a speck of her previous bright innocence in those eyes.

“Such a clear blue moon we have tonight. But let us end the intermission here, we can enjoy the moon on another occasion. But I must admit, the red of blood will go splendidly with tonight’s cobalt sky”

I felt a severe chill as if a tongue of ice licked up the back of my neck.

Shuria jumped down, and the other two followed.

And right as they did, the already withered tree crumbled back into the earth as if its time had been accelerated many fold.

“Khshishi”

“Thank you so much for guiding them, Teddy”

It’s duty complete, the teddy bear who seemed to recognize Shuria as master trotted off to her. My supposed half-sister then proceeded to gently stroke the doll’s head.

“The other two, I thought you looked familiar, you’re the same people I met outside town, the ones in battle with that Blackorc, are you not?”

“Oh? So you remember us. Here I thought you wouldn’t bother”

“I thought her intelligence was that of a bagworm, but her memory is a tad bit better it seems”

“...Fucking trash, it appears conversing is pointless. Return Sori to me, now”

The black haired boy and the beastkin girl were laughing.

They must’ve been the fools who had come to Shuria’s aid. Previously, they had the look of warriors and were taking on a Blackorc just the two of them. The changed Shuria aside, I mustn’t make light of them. I now possessed magic so superior, I couldn’t see a way I could lose.

“Oh, of course. I’ll have her brought here immediately. Kitty, you can come now”

Upon two sharp claps of her hand, what appeared out of the forest on the other side was the cat plushy I’d once bought for Shuria. The knife and fork were no longer in its hands but affixed to its side, and its small hand now pulled on a chain.

“Nishishishishi”

“Urk, ahh!!”

“SORI!!”

My dear Sori crawled on all fours behind the feline doll. Her clothes were torn all over and her limbs bound in thick metal shackles.

She had a leather collar, like those used on untrained animals, on her neck which linked back to the chain held by the cat plush.

“Kitty, you can let her go”

“Nishish”

“Aiee!?”

After letting go of her collar chain, the cat then used its knife to cut away the chains on Sori’s limb-binding shackles.

“Go on to your master now, bait”

“Eh, ah”

As if compelled by Shuria’s command, the hesitating Sori slowly walked to me.

And after a moment, as if she couldn’t bear her emotions, Sori now came running, tears around her eyes.

“Yumis-sama, Yumis-samaaa!!”

“Soriii!!”

I received my worn out, ragged, Sori in my arms as gently as I could.

“Ah, ahh, Sori, you’ve grown so thin——”

No, this wasn’t my Sori!!

“Miss! get away from ‘er!!”

In that instant, I could see Ronbert who’d been beside me draw his sword.

As the word Trap surfaced to my mind, I immediately made to push away this thing that pretended to be Sori, but I was a moment too late.

“Khshishishi!!”

That fake Sori had taken out a small multicolored dagger with the symbol 8 carved on it, and had furthermore stabbed it into me, as it sneered at me, twisting Sori’s beautiful face into a crude grin.

That laugh sounded oddly similar to the one from that teddy bear creature.

“Ukh!!”

Once I’d jumped backwards, away from the fake which showed no more reaction, Ronbert chopped off its arm.

“Roar O spirit of wind, Lightning!!”

“Khshishishijjjii!!”

I finished the doppelganger with my green lightning that resulted in the creature bursting into mist, leaving not even a corpse.

“Ah, so you did see through the guise, only the appearance was the same after all”

Shuria said non-chalantly as she put on another warped smile.

“Kusukusu, okey, are we all ready for the main event? I’m not the only one who’ll be performing tonight”

I subdued the pure rage boiling inside me from the fact that they’d used Sori’s appearance as a means to deceive me, and pulled out the dagger stabbing into me.

That small sword too disappeared into mist.

“What did y—— —”

What had they done to me, I couldn’t finish asking.

“Ugh, Aa AAHH!! My, head...”

A tremendous volume of foreign memories were seared into my brain. It felt as if something was directly flowing inside my head. No, it wasn’t my head that was being tampered with, it was my very soul. Things were becoming an unorganized mess inside me, as I felt what seemed to be a part of my soul being overwritten.



Let’s see. Did it work?

I was trying something completely new and untested, and honestly didn’t even know if it was possible. I just happened to have an idea and went with it, and if it didn’t work, that’d be fine too.

If I got this idea a bit earlier, I could’ve used it on Barkus and his goons, missed a fine opportunity there.

“Hey Miss! Fucking bastards, what’d you do to ‘er!!”

The big guy who seemed to be the boss of Yumis’ personal army yelled.

“Meh, just got her to remember some stuff”

I’d had Yumis stabbed with an 『Eight Eyed Bookblade of Transparency』 that I pre-filled with as much mana as I could shove inside.

The 『Eight Eyed Bookblade of Transparency』 had the ability to read the target’s status and log it.

So what was this ‘status’?

Where’s this sword pulling all this info out from?

It’s definitely not the body, if the status came from the body, it wouldn’t have the target’s name on there. You could make an argument for the brain being the source, but then even newborns had their own status including a name.

That meant that it got this information from the soul.

The thing called a soul definitely did exist in this world. For example, wraiths, a type of undead that were soul only, were real creatures.

Now, if the soul stored all this data, then what the 『Eight Eyed Bookblade of Transparency』 was doing was copying that data inside. Then, couldn’t it be possible to copy the data on Yumis I had from my 1st run directly into the current her?

No look, I realized that this interpretation of its power is way too liberal. But if it worked, she’d remember what she did to me in the 1st run. If it didn’t, whatever.

The mission objective wouldn’t change no matter the outcome. It was a matter of feeling. If she remembered, then she’d scream her pain knowing what she did.

And by the looks of it, the trick worked.

“Haah, haah, what, did you, do to me, my, memories...”

“Why don’t you answer that yourself? you should know”

“...Ukei Kaito, the hero from another world, you’re supposed to’ve been executed, wait, past tense? But aren’t these my”

Her mutters told it all, she recognized me as me.

“...Haha”

I suddenly felt joy, so much, extraordinary joy.

“AHAHA, AHAHAHAHA!! Aa,... Aa, ahh, AHH!! I’m so happy, sooo damn HAPPY to see you, you know that, Yumis? Last time it was when I was killed, and now we can finally do that second waltz. Raise the curtains, raise them high, HIGH!! The foolish Hero once again enters the stage!! And the Mage joins in, whether she likes it or NOT!!”

Were the memories all overwritten, or were they saved under a different name?

Who cares, I sure didn’t. It was all the same to me.

She was back. That was all that mattered.

“...I’d like you to refrain from speaking complete gibberish, but as I see it, your objective is counter to my dream, is it not?”

“IT IS!! And I’ll make due on my vow, right now!! I’ll kill you! I’ll kill you all!! Starting with YOU, Yumiss!! I’ll send you to the pits of despair, desolation and derangement, I’ll make sure you DIE, painfully!!”



Chapter 25

The Hero's Party, Rejoice In Blood And Slaughter

"IT IS!! And I'll make due on my vow, right now!! I'll kill you! I'll kill you all!! Starting with YOU, Yumiss!! I'll send you to the pits of despair, desolation and derangement, I'll make sure you DIE, painfully!!"

It was finally time. My mind, my body, my soul, my everything was absolutely ready for this.

First, we'll destroy her forces in a head on battle.

"Such nonsense!! Even if I can't see your status, I can feel that you're much weaker now!! Lightni..."

Yumis' words got caught in her throat the moment she attempted to cast.

"Nope, that dagger I had you stabbed with was covered in a spell venom that messes with your ability to mold mana. Even if you use an antidote item, until all the poison is out of your system, you can't cast even the tiniest fireball."

"Ukh..."

Making a frustrated expression, Yumis fell back, opting to deal with her poison situation. Now that she had her 1st run memories, the mage could actually finish counteracting Minnalis' handmade spell venom in a matter of 3 minutes.

Basically, this meant we had all the time we needed to kill every one of them.

"Now, we'll be crushing you. Be sure to enjoy this 3 minute opening act, from the edge of your front stage seat."

Right then, let's have a small warm up finishing off her personal troops.

My blades of choice were the [[Soulblade of Origin]] and the [[Ghostblade of Heartfire]].

The battle then started as if a fuse had been lit.

“They got only 3 of ‘em!! Don’t panic, we can kill ‘em easy!!”

That man, I think he was called Ronbert, stood in front of Yumis and calmly handed down orders.

There were 50 enemies, so we’d each get 15 or so. Then again, it was Shuria’s village that got decimated, so they were all rightfully her prey. So basically, Minnalis and I were going to hold back on how many we crush, we should behave ourselves after all.

“...Hahahah!! What’s wrong, you chicken shit bastards!! Fight like you mean it, fucking pussies!!”

The three of us dispersed in separate directions, and like putting sugar on an anthill, the goons, who only relied on their confidence in numbers, split up to hunt us down.

Of course, I wouldn’t dream of instantly ending their lives like I did that mountain of monsters. We would break them just enough so that they won’t be a threat, deal fatal attacks in a way that they bleed slowly and painfully before dying.

“What’s with these b-GAAHH!!”

“They’re too fas-GYAAHHH!!”

“No, NOO-GAHRHR!! ”

I stabbed both eyes, then cut the tendons in both legs. Once their bodies started falling, I broke the bones in their arms backwards, and for an extra helping of pain, I made it so that those jagged bone tips tear through the muscle and jut out from the outside.

In no time at all, 3 wonderful objets d’art were rolling on the ground.

“Kuhahahah, hm? Oops, that’s a miss, he’s passed out already”

Here I was, giving them the opportunity to see their life slowly dwindling away, but that unconscious guy was going to just die bleeding out normally.

Meh, no biggie, there was lots more where they came from.

“What, that scare you now? Where’d those balls go, damn useless mercs!”

When I looked again, their initial willingness to fight was all gone, they looked scared, hesitant to approach any closer. I wasn’t going to wait for their balls to grow back though.

“GUHAAA!!” x 2

I jumped into the fray myself, shoving my swords into the gaps in the armor of the frontmost two, slicing into their elbows, I avoided lopping their arms off since I didn’t want them passing out on me again.

“Hah, an idiot, you die now!!”

Seeing both my weapons currently occupied, one of the prey tried to stab me in the chest.

Normally, this wouldn’t be a bad move. None of these soldiers were gutless enough to let a prime opportunity pass. Problem was, this wasn’t an opportunity at all.

“GYAAAA!!”

“Not so sure about that, are ya now!”

The [[Wingblade of the Healbug]] had a thin, translucent blade like an insect’s wing, with a red hilt and handle.

It felt good hearing the man’s pain as this sharp sword smoothed out his face, slicing away his lips, nose and eyebrows.

After that one quick swing, I got rid of the [[Wingblade of the Healbug]], pulled out the [[Soulblade of Origin]] and [[Ghostblade of Heartfire]], turned them vertical, and stabbed them into his feet.

I then proceeded to kick his completely defenseless body, sending him flying.

“GUOGYAAHHH!!”

As usual, I reinforced that kick with an instantaneous coating of mana right before it hit, generating many times more power.

His flesh and bones were much weaker than my soulblades that were extra toughened with a ton of mana. The impact of my kick was being counteracted by the swords stabbed deep into his feet, and he ended up basically torn off at the ankles.

“Shit, that monster!!”

“Nope, no running away now, be a good sport.”

“GIYAAHH!!”

One of them attempted to run away screaming, but I closed in with sky walk and used one of the longswords strewn about to pin one of his feet to the ground.

The prey around me realized that they couldn’t even afford to run away now and their movements greatly lagged due to their incredible fear.

“The fuck is that guy!! Hey Miss, what’s the hold up with yer spells!!”

“I need just a little more time, hold them off until then!!”

“What the hell!!! We’re getting annihilated out there, I’m running!!”

“What!? You dare betray me!?”

“Shut it ya dyke!! Either I run or they kill me!!”

But there was still some idiot stupid enough to try. So to set an example, I gifted him with a throwing knife.

“GUGEH!! GYAAAHHH, FUCK FUCK FUCK!!!”

The knife struck the man, Ronbert, perfectly in the shoulder, after this he started to roll around on the ground, screaming in pain.

We’d prepared for runaways by having these knives coated in Minnalis’ pain poison. As the name implied, the effect of this venom was to heighten the target’s senses and spread continuous, searing pain all over their body.

It also promoted blood circulation, preventing the target from fainting too easily. It was unlike other poisons in that it dealt damage at a much slower rate, focusing on

causing as much pain as possible.

“Hey, what’d I just say? Give me a show here you bastards, not one of you will get out of here alive unless you kill us.”

“Aieeee!!” x 3

I spoke in pure bloodlust, without even bothering to augment the effect with mana.

“You got everything to lose, so fight like you mean it, I’ll massacre every one of you.”

◇ ◇ ◇

“GYAAHH!!” “NO, PLEASE!” “MELTING, MY ARM, IT’S MELTINGGG!!” “HOT, HOT, HOT!! I’M BURNING!!”

“Kufuh, kufufufufuh!! Heyheyhey, what’s the matter everyone? What ever happened to me being just a weak girl?”

I had expected men such as them, men who readily accepted dirty work, to put up a better fight. Quite a disappointment.

We’d looked into their levels and status values beforehand and so knew that, at least according to the numbers, I wasn’t all that much stronger.

They were all around level 50, in adventurer terms, from D up to C ranked. Meanwhile, I was level 76 currently, and going by simple numbers, I would have a hard time dealing with just 4 of them simultaneously.

That said, my Technique stat had risen to D+ as of late, and goshujin-sama had determined that I’d be fine as long as I used Phantom Flame Poison Demon.

Their technique was weak. Just the way they swung their swords would affect the outcome in deadly combat. Their fighting styles were inferior.

Their blades were slow, their reaction speeds were slow, their unbalanced exertion of strength made their attacks exceedingly easy to deflect.

Their so-called dirty work might just have consisted of ganging up on weaker foes or committing assassinations on sleeping targets, not exactly the type of work that honed

their combat techniques. In other words, they were weaklings.

It was just as goshujin-sama had declared, we were not fighting, but crushing them.

(Oh my, that won't do. I'm supposed to be merely supporting cast this time around. I shouldn't be too greedy with them.)

"Die, you slutty bunny whore!!"

"I am not a whore, you flea."

"HIGYAAA!?"

As I cut away at the foolish insect who'd charged at me, a tiny spurt of his blood touched my cheek.

How dirty, I naturally scowled.

Still, it was indeed difficult having to hold back so as not to kill them instantly. Presently, I wasn't quite as skilled as goshujin-sama, like how he pierced through the gaps of their armor, or how he thinly sliced away at moving opponents. I needed much training.

As such, I had decided to basically aim for their fingers, ears and eyes, for men, their manhoods, and for women, their chests, as cutting those away wouldn't cause them to die that easily.

"You won't be using it anymore, so think of it as me doing you a favor."

"Eh? GIYAAHH!!"

"Quite loud aren't you, even a dog would come to behave after you neuter them. Ah, I forgot that you were much more stupid than even dogs. I suppose I can't blame you too much then."

I turned away from the now frothing man and faced another enemy.

"Please try not to bore me too much, alright? Since, well, I won't be fighting all that much after this. Kufufuh, kufufufuh!!"





“What the fuck is this doll, no, my, MY EYES!!”

This man must’ve killed the nice uncle who brought us those tasty vegetables.

“What’s my sister-!? No, she’s not... GAH!”

This soldier must’ve murdered the innocent neighborhood children in cold blood.

“STOP, WHY ARE YOU-GUEHH!?”

“No, it, it’s not me!! My armor, it’s, it’s moving!! GUEHH!!”

These monsters must’ve sent mother and Shelmy to their graves with wide smiles on their faces.

“Kusu, kusukusukusu, ahh, fear, fear to your heart’s content.”

Gourmet Kitty-san scooped out their eyes, chopped off their noses, sheared off their ears, and finally lopped off their tongues before feasting on all of it.

Teddy-san took on the guises of their loved ones, and took advantage of their hesitation to defeat them.

I was using Spirit Puppeteering to extend mana threads into their swords and armor, making them kill each other, making them kill themselves.

I was quite a bit weaker level-wise, but I more than made up for it by using Spirit Puppeteering which was quite effective in dealing with humans.

Since, after all, every one of them was in tough metal armor.

Most of them couldn’t resist my force of mana with their simple brute strength. Those who could would be slowed enough for Kitty-san and Teddy-san to bring them down, taking care not to kill them too quickly.

“Aw, does it hurt? But this isn’t even close. I simply must have you taste the pain of my village much, much more.”

Yes, I, Shuria, could now take delight as I killed, killed and killed them. This stage, these 3 minutes were what Kaito-sama and Minnalis-san had prepared solely for my enjoyment.

This was the stage set for me to kill with my own hands, the fiends who killed and captured my fellow villagers under orders from Yumis nee-sama.

“Ahah, cry more, scream more, more!! Feel with your bodies all the pain and suffering those villagers faced at your hands!!”

I will directly control the full plate armored corpses Teddy-san made and slaughter those villains.

“Stop, I beg you, please!! I, I’m just a hired hand!”

“Surely you jest!! Do you expect me to not hold you responsible with that sort of excuse!? What of my innocent fellow villagers then!! What did they do to deserve their peaceful everyday to fall into hell, all because of you!!”

“GYAHH, NO, STAHP, GYAAHHH, GABHRH!!”

I was so enraged, I chopped off his right arm, left leg, left arm, then right leg before finally piercing his neck, killing him instantly.

“Ah~ my bad. I hadn’t needed to do that last stab... Killing them is such a waste.”

I was grinding my teeth.

...3 years, 3 whole years.

Mother, Shelmy, all those villagers had been played with all that time.

Inside that dungeon, they’d been subjected to inhumane experiments and reduced to monsters.

I had to make them pay, I had to make them suffer all that span of pain in a matter of hours as they died. Pain enough that their minds become mush, enough that they break.

“Yes. All of you, all of you should break down into mush. Kyahah, kyahahahahahah!!”

“Nishishishishishi!!”

“Khshishishishishi!!”

Kitty-san and Teddy-san resonated with my feelings, raising shrill laughter as well.

“AIEE!! GOHBRH!?”

“GIH!? GAH, GYAAHH!!”

“Kusukusu, ah~, I’m about to get so wet!!”

So much fun, so little time.

Kaito-sama and Minnalis-san said that they would cover for any mistakes on my part, so I could revel as my heart desired.

So I will lick, suck and savor it.

—— ——— — Every delicious morsel of this limited time.

Chapter 26

The Hero, Destroys The Mage (1)

The place was full of the splashing sounds you heard when walking across puddles after a bit of rain.

Those sounds of course, did not come from such a wholesome activity.

“HURRDS, ID HURRRDS” “GOFHFH, URGHH” “BLERGH, ERGHGH” “MY ARM, I GOT NO ARM, MY LEG, WHARRR?”

The gentle night wind carried the stink of rust, the brilliant moon shone on the many pools of blood spread all over.

Their convulsing bodies were flopping around, maybe from pain, maybe from bodily reactions, and this generated those splashing sounds made in their own blood. This scene of humans broken apart, crying out in sheer agony, was simply perfect as a prelude to Yumis’ downfall.

All these people had after all walked down the path of trampling over others along with the green haired mage.

That said, these men were also merely pawns to Yumis, if they broke, she just had to get rid of them.

“The hearth of hell shall reduce to ash, and demonic flames shall plunder all, Demon’s Fire.”

With a flourish of her hands, Yumis released a torrent of dark flame that swallowed her incapacitated troops.

“HODD!? AM BUHHRR-GOAHH!!” “Aah, warm, I can die, n...” “BUAA...”

“Aww, you killed them. Well, they were going to be dead in a bit anyway.”

The bastards I’d de-limbed, I made sure they wouldn’t die quickly and while avoiding

their major arteries, I instead tore up their meat and broke many bones.

Minnalis and Shuria weren't as skilled in their technique so their prey would've died after 30 minutes or so, but mine, I'd carefully made into meatbags so that they'd live for another 2 to 3 hours. They could've even been saved if they got treatment within the first hour.

Then again, pawns who lost could be called useless anyway, so they'd meet the same end regardless was what I thought.

"Oh but it is much more, these Hearth Flames of Hell can..."

"I don't need the expo. From the way you're talking, looks like my backup copy theory was correct. The main you seems to still be the 2nd run version."

If she'd been overwritten, she wouldn't have tried to explain a spell that the old her knew that I knew.

She now had her knowledge from another world, from the future of it no less. Which basically meant that my soulblade didn't store and paste her entire soul in this her.

It was great for my revenge if she could remember, but this also meant granting her access to more power. Right now, Yumis had all the knowledge of the spells I helped her develop.

"Demon's Fire or Hearth Flames of Hell, a spell that combines spirit, fire, and earth. It's used to make a Tenebris Ignis Giant, a chimera-fied combination of Flesh Golem and undead creatures using corpses, earth and fire as catalysts. I know your tricks well enough."

The soldiers who were enveloped in the black flame became pitch black skeletons and started merging together.

"-! Why, you cannot do a thing even if you know, can you? Myself of the future seems to have found you quite the pain with how you played the runaway buffoon. Let me make it up to you for her, and burn you into nothingness right this instant."

"Oi oi, you sure about that? If you kill me, how ever will you find your sweet precious Sori-chan?"

“That is a non issue, I could use simple ‘necromancy’ to reap all the information out of your soul. Though I am interested in your alien corpse, I simply cannot let you exist in this world for laying a hand on my Sori. You, that beast-kin and Shuria. Do you not expect me to generously free the world of you trash?”

Yumis shrugged her shoulders as she snickered.

But under that calm exterior lay an unimaginable rage towards us. All the better for us, we can enjoy our revenge much better like this.

“GB00000HHH!!”

“BG00000HHHH!!”

Two flaming golems rose up, roaring unintelligibly.

They were manifestations of the defilement of many corpses.

The blackened bones of Yumis’ troops had gathered together to form these 5 to 6 meter tall monstrosities that were lit in violet fire. Rather than sturdy golems that protected their master, these two looked like a pair of demons summoned from hell.

Due to the coating of violet flames all over their bodies, or maybe the ominous presence they gave off, these golems of bone looked bigger than they actually were.

“Alright, I’ll be taking those myself, like we planned. Minnalis, Shuria, can you take care of the prep for later?”

“Very well, goshujin-sama, but please take care not to over do it.”

“Yes Kaito-sama, please don’t kill her accidentally, okey? We need to break her together okey?”

“...C’mon, can’t you girls trust me some more?”

“It’s because we can feel your vengeful rage already.” x 2

...They weren’t wrong.

The [Holy Sword of Vengeance] is great at making sure no one’s going to betray you if

you form the vow with them, but it gets problematic at times like this because all the rage gets shared around. Neither they or I can hide that sort of feeling. I can't play dumb basically.

"Ahh, just go already. I'm still sane enough to know when to stop. And I'm not so inconsiderate that I'd start eating the meal before it's even cooked."

As I jokingly went 'shoo shoo' with my hands, Minnalis lifted up Shuria and leapt away to the back.

"Ok then, let's get this show on the road."

"Was that alright? You relinquished your 3 fold advantage of numbers just like that; are you trying to imply that your weakened present self can stand against me alone?"

"Sure I am. If you don't recall, you're weaker now too. It's not as if a few new memories will give you level or stat boosts."

(Though your Technique did shoot up apparently)

Her hidden status window showed it at B+ right now.

Since she'd stolen most of Shuria's elemental talent, her magic skill had evolved far beyond what was appropriate for her level, it'd gone from Magical Arts to the higher level skill Sorcery.

The skill's level was still low, but it was without a doubt strong.

But this wasn't even near what I couldn't handle.

"Plus, I don't see you chasing after them. Isn't that cause you also want this slight advantage?"

"...Conceited aren't you, I seem to recall you getting captured and killed by us because you stayed alone, just like this."

"Oh yeah? Then how come, in the 1st run, after I killed that maniac assassin Gorde you brought along, your side always brought 4 or more people to hunt me down? If I was so weak, how come you never came with 3 or less to finish me off?"

After the princess bitch Alesia told me the truth and I went on the run, I'd let go of all pretenses about my status and techniques, my every hesitation about killing creatures of this world, of murder, completely disappeared.

I'd come to accept that I needed to kill my enemies as something natural.

The mage and the assassin.

Those two probably thought that they could take me head on from our then disparity in status. This mage bitch had teamed up with the assassin, Gorde, and came to hunt me. She likely planned to have the highly dexterous Gorde hold me down as she completed her chant for a high level mind control spell. She might've succeeded too, if I wasn't already desensitized to the act of killing.

At the time, I still had that powerful status down curse put on me from Alesia's firebolt. Not quite what I'd call tip top condition.

Looking at the results though, I'd completely turned the tables.

I had overpowered Gorde even in that condition, and he couldn't fulfill his job of buying time for the spell.

Not only was he faster than me in terms of pure speed, he supposedly had a mastery in rogue skills in addition to excellent techniques in assassination. He could've been described as roughly my equal.

But he was, in the end, still sub-par.

His sword hand was slow and his feints were too easy to call. From his line of sight, to his breathing, to the flexing of his muscles, to the flow of his mana, I could use all that to anticipate his moves. His skills of deception had turned into childish swordplay for me.

It wasn't as if I was completely unscathed, but the fight was similar to a cat driving a mouse into a corner, and the mouse desperately taking a bite. The cat might be hurt, but the mouse was still liable to die in the exchange. If only I'd been at full health back then, I could've killed Yumis along with that bastard.

But as soon as the witch noticed that she was at risk, she used her already accumulated mana and forcefully changed the spell into one of teleportation. She escaped. If I hadn't

let that happen, I could've killed them some more in my 1st run.

Of course, I didn't exactly have the capacity to have my revenge so easily as I'm having now.

"Since it turned out to be a Backup Copy, guess I'll just have to have YOU experience it too. You worms can do nothing to me without gathering all your numbers."

I instantiated two 『Pilferblades of the Adversary』.

"! Enough with your nonsense. You can't beat me!!"

"Hah!! Showing your true colors are you, YUMIIIISSSS!!"

She commanded the Tenebris Ignis Giants to attack while forming further spells.

First, as a test, I went with normal strength and clashed swords with one of the behemoth's own purple flaming bone greatsword.

"UGHKAAAA"

"Tch!! Thing's like a boulder."

I'd say, as a monster, the Tenebris Ignis Giant wouldn't rank at anything below C.

It felt as tough as Blackorc hide, and with the amount of power it was exerting, even while using the 『Pilferblades of the Adversary』 I was put at a slight disadvantage in strength. On top of that, its fire that grazed me in such close quarters had the effect of draining my MP.

This kind of made me want to use other soulblades, but then they'd lack the strength to take these things on.

"Tri Lightning!!"

"Woah."

Streams of lightning magic headed towards me from different directions.

The other golem was also coming from behind. This one apparently preferred blunt

weapons as it had a giant mallet in its hands.

I loosened the strength in my arms to end the sword-lock, used the golems own force to twist out of the way, and then created a thin, cylindrical bar in the air using sky walk and grabbed on to it.

In the same motion, I swung up, dodging the oncoming lightning strikes, and like an acrobat, I placed my feet on the other golem's hammer, in that instant, I was positioned between the massive weapon and my own bar in the air that wouldn't last much longer.

"GYUURAAHHH"

I let myself be sent flying by the momentum of the hammer and after doing a spin in the air to steady myself, I landed some distance away.

"Hah, pathetic. The old you could've stopped those attacks with pure strength."

"I could say the same about you. You used Demon's Fire when you already know much more powerful spells. Of course you did, your status simply isn't caught up to your knowledge."

"Impudent fool... You're being an eyesore. Golems!!"

Yumis probably thought she could win with this strategy, she kept the sword golem by her side as a guard and made the hammer golem dash towards me. She also began gathering mana for her next spell.

I took some distance, careful not to let the golem out of sight, even though with its large body it could only move slowly.

"..."

"O great diverging spirit of wind, O lord whose aim is truest of all..."

It was the aria for Multiple Lightning. Her actions, counter-actions to my actions, they were so easy to predict.

I let out a small chuckle at how utterly simple she was.

I readied the technique that let me solo the mountain of monsters just the other day, a method to quite literally surpass my bodily limits. I began filling the 『Viridian Sword of Crystal』 with mana.

“That was enough warm up I guess.”

“Come to life for that single moment, Streak in lightning that denies elusion, Multiple Lightning!!”

“...Overlimit ”

As I muttered the name, confirming its activation, a pale green light enveloped me.

Everything turned gray, slow. I could see the beginnings of lightning bolts racing towards me.

Lightning attacks produced by spells were different from the naturally occurring feat of nature. True, this type of spell is quite a bit faster than your average fireball, but the lightning produced by the laws of physics was much faster. That’s why it was possible to do fantasy actions like directing the magical lightning in a desired path.

I leapt away from the fast approaching lightning and rolled in towards the hammer golem on my tail.

This feat was a step above and beyond what my stats allowed for. A technique to draw out power without concern for the body.

It wasn’t on the edge of not breaking my body, but on the assumption that it’d break, and in exchange for the damage, I could squeeze out tremendous power that defied stats for just a few moments.

And by using 『Viridian Sword of Crystal』 I constantly healed my overexerted, torn muscles, extending the little time I broke through all potential.

“Wha!?”

“HOAAAAA!?”

“Too slow ain’t ya!!”

Once, twice, three times, four, five.

Now facing it one on one, before the bone creature could even swing down its hammer, I struck down with 5 sweeps of my blade, each crushing its body.

My attacks that were more like cannon fire than sword slashes, blasted away at its left shoulder blade, right upper arm, right thigh and left calf, making those areas look as if they were gouged out.

“ORAAAAA!!”

“Damn!! Go-, No, hah!!”

Yumis tried to send her other golem in to aid, but then thought better of it, and fired off a silent fireball.

She of course realized that her hammer golem was at a disadvantage, but she didn’t want to risk leaving herself with no guard.

That was the correct choice. The sword golem wouldn’t have made it in time anyway.

For these golems, if you destroyed their center, their core, they would immediately stop functioning, and crumble into dust.

Even if she sent in the other golem, I’d destroy this one’s core long before the other came close.

“Fuck off back to hell!!”

I dodged Yumis’ fireball and broke the now unbalanced hammer golem at the legs.

Now practically done for, the golem attempted a last struggle by intensifying its weakly lit coat of flames.

This was an action akin to suicide.

The violet fire was the golem’s life force, and if it was used too intensely, the remaining time it could operate would rapidly decrease.

“Give it up, stupid golem.”

I felt my MP draining from the intense violet flames, but I destroyed the core under its thick torso anyway.

Chapter 27

The Hero, Destroys The Mage (2)

Overlimit.

It didn't almost break me, but was supposed to. This ability, once used, causes me injury, and in return, greatly magnifies my stats for a very short time.

And while I get torn apart inside, the 『Viridian Sword of Crystal』 does its job of healing me, making this a powerful and practical ability.

It was one of the trump cards my current self could use.

"You are quite the idiot to have returned my memories. I know it, the weakness of that Overlimit of yours."

"..."

Yes, just as Yumis said, this power had a very obvious downside.

Since I was constantly healing myself, there was the vast usage of MP on that front. And since the 『Viridian Sword of Crystal』 works by simply accelerating the body's natural healing process, I also lose a ton of calories. That was the reason I got intense pangs of hunger after using this trump card.

As my level increased, I'd have more place to store extra calories, and could even gain a skill like Stockpile to aid the process. Eating too much now would only make me fat.

In other words, this move won't last long.

I'd used it against the army of monsters in a more subdued way and that still made me exhausted in 7 minutes or so.

If I went full throttle, I'd last 3 minutes max.

There was also the fact that a lot of my mana was drained from that Tenebris Ignis

Giant.

I had only 30% MP remaining. The signs of an MP high had started showing. I stopped using overlimit.

“Hah! Right back at you, Yumis.”

But Yumis was not much better off.

Demon's Fire cost little MP compared to the strength of the golems it bore.

But if the core of one of the golems is destroyed, a feedback curse is set on the spellcaster which causes a massive drop in their MP followed by intense pain.

Minnalis' poison that silently drained mana while preventing spells, the high cost spells Tri Lightning and Multiple Lightning.

And finally, one Tenebris Ignis Giant's core: destroyed.

This rate of expenditure was too high for the level she was at now. So I wasn't the only one putting on a tough front.

“And yet, I still have 40% of my mana left over, your Overlimit has run out, and finally, I have one more Tenebris Ignis Giant under my command.”

“ ... ”

“You are and will be always the fool. If you simply hadn't given me these memories, I might've been wary of that power of yours, maybe even giving you the time to recover.”

Because I need to constantly keep healing when I'm in overlimit mode, there would be a faint green glow around me for the duration of it. When she saw that the glow had snuffed out, she gained assurance of victory and smiled in confidence.

“End him with all your might, o golem.”

“RUBOOOOHH”

At Yumis' command, the sword golem flared up in its violet fire like the other one did just recently.

If I used any ordinary soulblade on that, it'd disappear having all the mana inside sucked away.

And seeing as I hadn't moved, Yumis began readying a spell. She wasn't voicing any chant, but I could see water and wind mana gathering around her.

I had a good idea what spell she'd choose in a situation like this.

"You really never change, do you."

My low mutter was drowned out completely by the earth shaking thumps the golem made as it ran over.

"I was a fool, but you're much more of a fool in your own right."

All of this was still within my expectations.

So of course, I had prepared ways to counter and destroy her every move fully.

"Come, [Absorber's Edge]."

I instantiated a soulblade I'd unlocked for this specific battle.

It was as big as an ordinary longsword, with the blade being split in red and blue cleanly along the middle.

It had the power to aggregate anything I designate around me.

Yumis showed surprise seeing me holding this. She of course knew about the [Absorber's Edge] and I could tell that she was thinking, What is he planning now?

But the fact that she hadn't caught on instantly, led her to my checkmate.

I turned towards the approaching golem, and at the right timing, thrust the soulblade into the ground.

"! What's!?"

"BLRBLAAHH!"

I made it look like I activated the trap with my sword and collapsed the ground from under the golem.

The bone monster made a dumb roar as it descended into the 7 meter deep pit, landing in the water which splashed up all the way to the surface.

“A pitfall!? And, water...?”

I pulled out the Absorber’s Edge and dashed towards the golem to deal the finishing blow.

“!? You, imbecile. Did you think you could extinguish the golem’s hellfires with simple water!?”

“Once again, right back at you.”

Once the splash of water settled again, the golem in the hole looked to have most of its flames put out.

“I knew you’d use Demon’s Fire.”

“What, no, holy water!?”

Normal water would do nothing to the curse inducing hellfires of the golem, but holy water, water that’d been blessed by the church, was a different matter entirely.

This golem, by the nature of its creation, had many undead traits. Thus, its accursed flames would undoubtedly be doused when exposed to holy water.

I jumped down in the pit, and pierced the slow, only slightly flame-coated golem, in its core.

“GAHHH, urgh, ahh, I, can still!!”

Even under the extreme pain from her MP being drained away after the destruction of the core, Yumis didn’t stop gathering the mana. And even as the golem returned to dust, it obeyed Yumis’ commands and prevented my escape for an instant.

“DIE, DAMNED HEROOO!!”

Yumis released her spell squeezing out the last of her strength.

“You’re making me repeat myself, Yumis.”

This too was one of the possibilities I kept in mind.

I filled 『Absorber’s Edge』 with mana and threw it to the wall opposite to me.

At the same time, A ceiling of wind that Yumis had created, blocked the exit to the pit.

“I knew from the start that you’d use Demon’s Fire, and,”

I snickered and then held my breath.

The moment 『Absorber’s Edge』 hit, all the water in the pit decomposed, creating huge volumes of oxygen and hydrogen. If all this exploded, I’d be fucked sideways.

“Since your old memories are there, you’d also use the low cost Trinity Blast to finish me off ——— O Water, amass into my sword.”

“TRINITY BLAST!!”

A tiny surge of electricity, and then, flames erupted. But this was no explosion of the three elements, water, wind and fire. Simply flames.

And those flames also instantly ended, ending the spell unclimactically.

“Fuhaah!? No, the fire, but why...!?”

“AHAHAHAHAHAHA!! Paaathetic Yuuumisss, your knowledge, your power, none of those were earned, all stolen. That’s why you’ll always be third rate, you monkey faced bitch!”

Yumis had learned that decomposing water into oxygen and hydrogen gas and setting fire to it would cause a massive explosion. But she didn’t at all know why this happened.

She just knew that there were two things called oxygen and hydrogen that came out of the water and were easy to explode.

She had no clue as to how the explosion was caused by the simultaneous combustion of the two elements. She didn't understand why I had separated the mixed atoms of oxygen and hydrogen into oxygen gas and hydrogen gas using [Absorber's Edge].

If she set fire to that, the only part that'd explode would be the thin, top layer where the two gasses were still mixed. Since the gasses were split, the rest of it would quickly burn away without exploding.

I jumped out of the pit, [Soulblade of Origin] in hand, and rushed towards Yumis.

"Kh, I haven't-!"

"No, you have, you lost!!"

I took out a pair of mana sealing hand shackles they make slaves wear.

I bound her hands in those shackles faster than she could notice, and after tripping her with a sweep of my leg, I stabbed my soulblade into the now fallen Yumis' hands from the back.

"Ghaa!! Ghh, aahhhh!!!"

I twisted and tilted the soulblade to spice up the pain.

"Kuhaha!! Take that, and that, and some more, hurts doesn't it? I'm pretty good at this aren't I? It's all thanks to you, every one of you. I'm so damn HAPPY I can see that distorted expression on you. Everything, everything I LEARNED, it's all for you, you people who betrayed me, heey, do you FEEL it? ALL the emotions I'm feeling right now?"

"Guh, uhu, a-ahhh!!"

Her palms, her heels, her elbows, her knees, I carefully put cuts on Yumis' body so as to keep her bleeding to a minimum.

"It was a fun fight, really. You were so damn predictable, I almost messed up trying to hold back the giggles you know? I knew you'd make that golem as soon as I turned your troops into garbage. Hurt's right? I recall you're the type that doesn't get happy MP drunk, but grumpy MP drunk. It hurt when I broke those cores didn't it? You can't hide it from me."

“Guh, uuhhh, haaah, haah.”

“Oops, my bad. They’ll get mad if I start snacking without them. Okay Yumis, be strong now, alright?”

“Uguahh!! gu, u, ahh.”

Many of her tendons now cut, Yumis could only lay limply on the dirt as I crushed her hands underfoot. I think I broke a few bones, let me do this little bit, please? Just a bit, a little tiny bit. My feet were grinding on their own.

And please, please don’t break, don’t you break yet, alright?

“That should be it for setting the table. Get ready for the main event. Yumis. I’m begging you. Don’t be easy to break.”

“Urgghh!”

I grip hard on Yumis’ head from under the chin.

“It’s high time we piss on and set fire to that pride of yours. We’ll do this in order, one by one, we’ll destroy each and every one of your dreams.”

The corners of my lips rose crookedly under all the unbearable emotions.

Chapter 28

And Then, It Made The Sound Of Breaking

Yumis was staring daggers at me from her position, still prone on the ground. But since I'd smashed her ankles, she wasn't going anywhere.

"Urgh, ah, you seem to take great pleasure in beating a downed, defenseless woman, Hero. I expect no less from a twisted man who lusts for the demon lord-DHH!!"

"Oh, so you get it. That's right, Leticia was a fine girl. And an ugly bitch like you don't get to speak of her with that filthy mouth."

I downed a potion to recover some MP while jostling Yumis' wounds with my sword. Then I healed those wounds and proceeded to make new ones. Once my MP got low, I'd repeat this.

Yumis, whose family was related to the country's defense, was a member of high noble society and had trained in skills to mute pain and the like. I couldn't expect much reaction from her like this, but in a way, it was better that she was able to take this punishment relatively unfazed.

Any normal person without these pain muters would've no doubt had their minds broken from the sheer agony, begging me to kill them already.

That aside, thanks to her resistances, I could enjoy a slice of fun.

So I killed time repeating this for a while. But I did try to keep the taste test to a minimum so as to not ruin the meal.

Minnalis still had some work to do in preparation, and Shuria, I wonder if she enjoyed herself enough? I was thinking about this and that and decided to contact them.

"Minnalis, Shuria, I'm just about done here. How're things on your end?"

I used the skill, Soul Speak.

I made use of the same method I once used when transferring the information from Mouse No.1 to Minnalis, a communication path using the link provided by the 『Holy Sword of Vengeance』.

Though apparently it becomes useless across long distances, it was much better than any ordinary communications magic item from the fact that it was impossible to intercept.

“Copy that, this is Minnalis. I have around half of half of the task left to do, apologies for the delay, goshujin-sama.”

“No, don’t worry about that. Actually, I’d be surprised if you were done so fast. I know you won’t slack on the job, but I worry you’re forcing yourself.”

And what’s up with ‘half of half of’.

No well, she’s so smart, I sometimes forget that she was originally a normal village girl, so it’s not hard to imagine her being unable to do proper math. I should set aside some time to teach her.

“How about you, Shuria?”

“Okey-dokey on my end, I was actually getting a little bored of playing with them just now.”

“Sounds perfect, you should come over here then. I bet you’ll enjoy the toy here a lot more than the ones there.”

“!!! Thanksies!!”

As soon as I heard her delighted reply, a blue magic circle blipped into existence over a part of the battlefield now desecrated from my fight with Yumis.

“That’s, isn’t that light from one of our teleport gems?”

“Yeah, thought we might as well help ourselves, you know?”

Teleport gems were as the name implied, stones that allowed for instant transportation.

They didn’t expend the user’s mana like my soulblades, but had demerits such as

limitations on the capacity, on distance to travel and on the activation time.

These gems were also rare and expensive, but nobles still kept a number of them so that they'd have a means to escape dire situations.

Then, after the teleportation circle let off a bright dazzle of light, Shuria was there, smiling ear to ear. She'd brought along her Kitty-san and Teddy-san, and around 20 people, men and women, young and old, all in their night wear.

The people other than Shuria were all individuals hired by Yumis personally, people who she trusted, and people who respected her. All of them had faces distorted in pain.

"Oi oi, I did tell you to play, but that's going overboard."

"Eh~ I believed this much was alright. What I did simply amounted to breaking off some of their fingers, having an ear or an eyelid bitten off, ripping out some hair here and there, not too much. I made sure to not do anything that could kill them so I think I'm safe."

It's a bit past safe I think.

Though on closer inspection, I could see that they wouldn't die from that state, and none of them look broken as of yet.

"And look here, Kaito-sama, you got your little fill of Yumis nee-sama yourself."

"Well, that uhm, the fight was over really fast as we'd expected right? And It's pretty boring just waiting here by myself."

That right there was me pigeonholing myself, a special skill of the Japanese.

"That aside, Yumis nee-sama, you look very good like that. I'm amazed how well 'sprawled in the mud' suits you."

"Shuria... You even dare, involve the servants..."

Yumis glared at the dark little girl, while Shuria simply smiled devilishly.

"Ok then, we'll be starting now, Yumis. The first event today is: *'Number 1, who can beat the snot out of Yumis!! No second chances, alright?'*. Everyone, applause!!"

“Clap clap clapsies!!”

It was like a kindergarten sports event was starting, we clapped our hands dumbly and intentionally.

“Come now you maggots, can’t you see the music has started?”

“AIEE!!” x 3

Shuria commanded, Teddy laughed, and Kitty clanged its fork and knife.

“No, please no more, don’t eat my ears!!”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, please, I will shave off all my hair, I’ll do anything, so please don’t pull off the skin!!”

Their voices were filled to the brim with terror.

“You over there, aren’t you the head butler. You should be an example to the others, show them what they must do.”

Following Shuria’s ice cold gaze, I could see she was looking at a man who had had all the hair on the right half of his head torn off. The skin in his scalp had bled and coagulated, darkened blood covered his pale blue face, making him look like a caricature out of a horror story.

He looked to have been played with the worst of the bunch. He was using his right hand to hold down his left, which was missing its index, ring and pinky fingers with the wounds cauterized.

“Aiee! My deepest apologies! My apologies for being trash, my apologies for being swine, my apologies for being a filthy maggot!!”

The man was trembling violently, like he was begging for his life, but managed to stand up with his convulsing expression.

“What, did you not understand me? Every fucking one of you maggots, get ready to work now, or else.”

“!!!” x 3

Stared down by the intense crimson eyes of the laughing girl, the other servants also stood up.

“Here Yumis, this is how you are to them.”

“Guh, ahh!!”

I grabbed Yumis by the arm and dragged her in front of her servants.

“My, apologies, Yumis-sama.”

“What do... GAH!?”

The head butler, now fully under the spell of fear and trepidation, took his own feet and stomped down on Yumis’ back.

And learning from their leader, the rest of them quickly followed suit.

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry!! I just don’t want to die!! I have a little sister, sick in bed!!”

“I, I’m doing this to protect my family!! Ahh, please forgive me Yumis-sama, please forgive me!!”

“GAH, Uph, GUH!!”

Under the many voices of apology along with the equally many feet trampling her, Yumis’ body was digging into the earth.

“Kukuh, AHAHAHAHAHA!! How’s the feeling of having your loyal servants muddy feet stomping your back? You’re soo pitiful, AHAHAHAHA!!”

“It’s like flies gathering on garbage. Ah, that won’t do, they’re the same as before!”

Of course, compared to these low leveled servants, in addition to the pain muters Yumis had, the mage wouldn’t feel a thing from their continuous barrage of blows. But these were the servants she trusted, the men and women who knew about and protected her relationship with Sori. The level of humiliation she was enduring from undergoing this constant trampling from her servants’ own feet must’ve been devastating.

“Kuh, you vile...!!”

It felt amazing looking at Yumis’ eyes colored in chagrin.

I lost track of how long I kept gazing at the scene. Some time later, Minnalis called me with Soul Speak.

“Goshujin-sama, I’ve readied everything.”

“Alright, we’ll finish up the first program of the night then. Right, you can stop now.”

After I said that, the servants all stopped and looked to me.

Yumis also looked, her face boiling in fury.

“Uhm, uh, what are we to—...”

“Your work is done here, die.”

“Eh,”

I used the [Soulblade of Origin] to chop off the man’s head.

His head dropped with a thud and rolled.

“W-why did you! We listened to eve-GAPHH!!”

The maid who tried to raise words of protest had her neck pierced by Kitty’s fork.

“What ever do you mean? The actor of course leaves the stage after their role is done. It’s the commonest of common sense.”

Shuria said in a small tilt of her head.

“NO, HELP M-GOHH!?”

“Please no, I’ll do anything, anything, just don’t kill m-GYAAHH NO NO NO!!!”

We thus ended the first piece of the performance by denying solace to those who had succumbed under our coercion.

Shuria and I cleaned up the actors who'd had their role done and over with.

"Demons, you're demons...!!"

"Oh my, Yumis nee-sama. I'm impressed that you could still care for these worms that dared to trample on you."

"You, you people with your sinister tastes forced them to do that!!"

Yumis glared at us, grinding hard at her teeth.

"*Kukukuh*, why so serious? We're barely at the end of the first act. Now that I've destroyed all those you trusted, let's get started with act 2. I'll now be destroying everything you've built up, your legacy."

I then activated a magic tool I obtained in town. This tool was like a telescope and I'd further modified it with the [Hookblade of Spellpatching].

The magic tool worked like a camera, similar to the magic creature I'd ordered from Duphein back when I wanted to confirm how the princess was liking my present.

I've used something like this in the 1st run too, so Yumis should know what's what.

"This is, a videograph of the town?"

I'd projected a video of Elmia in front of Yumis. She was getting anxious now.

We were now well into the evening, the town was quietly heading off to bed.

"Time for the 2nd round, now. *Minnalis*, *light it up*."

"At once, goshujin-sama."

Came her reply.

Right after, a boom erupted from the town of Elmia, tearing apart its sleep.

"Wh-!? What did you!?"

The video feed showed intense blue-white flame.

The town was lit up as the dark night sky was cast in flames.

We should've been quite far from the town proper, but the actual sounds still reached from the distance.

"W-what in god's name..."

"Look at it, those splendid fireworks. Fire that's burning down everything you are."

I'd ordered Minnalis to bomb the research institute where Yumis made her magic tools.

All her research, all that time she desperately spent trying to make the magic tool that would open the door to her dreams, all of it was burning to ashes.

Onlookers, people who ran out of their houses, alarmed because of the explosive sounds outside, looked on as the famed research building of Elmia was slowly demolished, all the books inside burning to a crisp, and all the gathered research material ruined forever.

It was such a beautiful flame.

The townspeople were in fact trying to put out the blazing flames, but simple water would do nothing to hinder that fire. Minnalis had used Phantom Flame Poison Demon to create a high intensity, highly flammable poison which she mixed into barrels of oil that she spread all over the building to start this grand incineration.

The resulting fire also looked out of this world, with it's azure tint that made it seem as if it'd be cold to the touch when in reality, it was much hotter than any normal fire, as if these blue flames had burst out straight from hell.

After some time, the local mages arrived and had to use magic to douse the flames, but by then, the blue flames had transformed most of the place into white ash without a semblance of its previous grandeur.

All that illuminated the area were the subdued flames, now still burning orange, along with the full moon high in the sky.

"A-ahhh, my, all my, accomplishments..."

“That ends the 2nd act. On to the 3rd now, I’ll be ripping apart your future.”

The video feed transitioned to the main landmark of Elmia, the stone monument.

“Wait...!? No, no you can’t...!!”

“Bang.”

I grinned ear to ear, brought together my hands, and as if I was crushing something unseen, made a light clap.

At almost the same time, the monument on the projection rumbled, then broke apart.

“No... Our treasured monument...”

Yumis’ voice was soft, trembling.

“Ahh, so good, that face you’re making is soo good Yumis. But fret not, it’s not over yet. I’ve destroyed your loyal servants, burned down all your accomplishments, and crushed your awaited future. Now, I’ll break everything you have now.”

“!? N-now wait, please, wait, I beg you. What more do you plan to ruin!?”

Yumis had an expression of extreme distress. Shuria then grazed her cheek with a hand.

The dark-skinned girl had on a smile very reminiscent of the one her mage sister once showed her before pushing her into hell.

“Yumis nee-sama, there’s no need for you to be afraid. You simply have to accept these as the fruits of the actions *you* have committed thus far. You actually don’t have to do anything anymore. All of this is a present to you, from me and my friends ♪”

The video once again changed to the scene of the ruined research institute backed by the Elmia house.

Undead goblins and redcap zombies began crawling out from under the debris and ashes.

“GHYARUOHH” “OOBOAHH”

And there weren't just one or two. The amount of undead creeping out from the nooks and corners had already exceeded 30.

"!! Kyaaa! Undead! Why are there undead monsters inside town!?"

After a woman yelled, as if a beehive had been rattled, the crowd of self-presumed unrelated bystanders that was silent in shock, descended into chaos.

"W-what is the meaning of this!? Where did you get so many undead!?"

"What are you talking about, those are the undead *you* made from slaughtering Shuria's village. Remember now?"

For today's performance, we'd gone to Shuria's old village.

It was now populated by an expanding number of undead.

They were still increasing under the effects of their collective malice piled up from the cruel way they were unreasonably killed, along with the residual mana left over after Yumis summoned her demon.

"They were all reborn as undead from the sheer suffering you cast on them, nee-sama. It's just as I've said, these are the fruits of the actions *you* have committed."

We'd spent several days setting up a teleport circle relay to summon all these undead, as well as grant a bit of revenge to the helpless villagers.

It was possible to activate a magic circle without actually pouring in your own mana.

The teleport circle was draining bottle upon bottles of MP potions, calling forth more and more zombies, that followed markings that I had Minnalis set up to better spread the damage.

"You, you would kill even the innocent civilians!?"

Yumis was getting paler as she spoke.

"Oh yeah, there's gonna be some casualties, sure."

I replied to her joyfully.

In reality, the earlier explosion had already made people aware of the zombie dilemma. We'd limited how many we'd summon there, and there were also specialists from the town church who could take charge in the extermination, so I didn't think there'd be too many deaths. Although, I saw no reason telling Yumis that.

I still estimated a hundred or two casualties among the civilians, but they were necessary sacrifices.

"Look, I need a lot of them to die tonight. Sear it into their memories as a catastrophic event, you know? I know it's sad, but this is something I need to do to fulfill my dream. I'm sure you know the feeling, don't you, Yumis."

"Kh, bastard...!"

I chuckled, *kuh kuh kuh*, and continued further,

"Also, what's with your 'innocent civilians'? Like you give a damn about them. Well, I understand, you don't want to admit it do you? Whatever will the commoners think after this event, surely you've realized?"

"W-what are you..."

"Hey tell me will you, kind Yumis nee-sama? Please teach this innocent Shuria who doesn't know the ways of the world. A sudden explosion at the research institute that my nee-sama personally oversaw, and from within came a horde of undead. What would they think of as the most likely scenario? Whoever will they deem responsible for this madness?"

Kusukusu, Shuria laughed as she played provocateur.

"No, NO! You'd have me put to blame for all this!?"

"Correct, correct, aaaand CORRECT!! AHAHAHAHA!! That's right, this is what you all did to me in the first world! You put all the evils of the demon lord on to me, the hero who saved your asses. And just like that, I'll be tearing down your image as the intelligent, kind fief lord, and expose you as the criminal who did illegal monster experiments to make her magic tools. But look, the big difference is that you actually did all that! AHAHAHAHA!!"

This is so ironic. In my 1st run, I'd helped them fight back the army of undead, but this

time, I'm causing the attack.

"Oh, but you won't be atoning for any of these crimes. You can't right? Since I'll be killing you right here. Of course, none of them will know that. You'll just quietly disappear on this day. Now, who do you think will have to carry that blame once you're missing indefinitely?"

"It, would be..."

If the main culprit of this disaster on Elmia, that is, Yumis, is missing, what then?

Yumis' crimes are her family's crimes.

Nevertheless, they could settle the matter by offering only Yumis' head. Even if all her family were blamed, the damages were minimal, so if they offered up the fief lord's only child, the rest could get away unscathed. But if it turns out that Yumis had gone into hiding, the blame would pour down on anyone related to her.

First of all, her relatives would be executed. I don't know how much of her extended family this'll effect, but her parents, the mother and father she respected and wanted approval from, would both be on the chopping block, definitely.

"You, damned, monster!!"

"KUHAAAAHAHA!! This is something you all did to me. Since you have your old memories, you have to know how this country killed my family and friends to summon me here. You heard from that fucking princess didn't you? You hunted me down and tried so hard to make me slip up by bringing that up over and over again. How's it feel now? How's it feel to have the same happen to you? How's it fucking feel to have your past, your future, and everyone, everything important to you, tarnished, stolen, destroyed!! Ahah~♪ AAHAHAHAHA!!"

I can't stop, I can't stop, I can't stop.

It's so fun, so much fun, I just can't stop laughing.

I still remember all those miserable days I spent wanted and hunted.

Burning in anger and humiliation, but still packing it inside, all that rage, all that unbearable rage. It was all for today.

“You, insane hero...! I’ll never forgive you, go to hell!”

Burning in anger and humiliation, Yumis directed all her unbearable rage at us.

“Die, you need to die!! You as well, Shuria you wench!! Why are you two even alive!? Ghosts of the past should stay in your place in hell!!”

Her eyes were dyed in wrath.

The best proof that Yumis was truly suffering.

“Kyahah! KyahahaHAHAHAHA!! You’re talking nonsense now, Yumis nee-sama. We’re already in hell, the very bottom of it. If we weren’t, how else could we drag you down to its depths?”

“Oh, that one’s pretty good, Shuria, AHAHAHAHA!!”

That’s right, we’d been sent to the pits of hell, and chose to live in it.

Rather than escaping from it with how scarred we are, we decided to get everyone to join us.

Yumis had it right. The moment we decided to embrace the idea of exacting revenge, we’d become ghosts, demons of the past.

“You’re, you’re all mad...!!”

Our mad cackling overlapped and resonated with each other.

I couldn’t get enough of Yumis who still put up a strong front despite being scared shitless.

“Yes yes, yeshyesyesYES!! Get ready for the climax now! This’ll be the final act! The main course today is your dream, Yumis! Shuria, I believe you’re ready?”

“All in order♪ Nee-sama, let me have the honor of presenting to you our final actress. Metal-san, come on in.”

Shuria called on her third familiar.

And with Metal-san moving her body, the woman who started off tonight's festivities once again dragged herself out of the forest. This time, it was indeed the real Sori.

She was still in her usual long skirt maid uniform. She looked to be walking alone, but hidden inside her bones lay a sinister trap. It was Metal-san, a joint creation by me and Shuria, where I melted some highly pure mithril using the firevenom of the 『Fire Spider's Leg Blade』 and Shuria gave it life with her Spirit Puppetry.

"You won't trick me-No, that's, SORI!!"

"Yumis -sama..."

Upon seeing Sori's terrified face, this time, Yumis really did have all the blood drain from her expression, she became white as a sheet of paper.

Her strong front, which was in the end, only a front, was rapidly breaking apart.

Now I was sure, this woman was everything that signified that bitch's dream.

"No, please no, please don't, not her, not my Sori....!!!"

She began to quiver intensely.

"This last act is called Dream Balloon. Shuria here's implanted her familiar within this maid's body. Just like we showed you, night after night."

"! No, then, that dream....!!"

"Yes, I especially asked Teddy-san to show you those dreams. How were they? Good fun, right?"

Sneered Shuria, to which Yumis reacted with even more apprehension.

"Ah~ that's it, I love that face. It appears there is value in poking at this filthy worm ♪"

"Kyah!! ghuhh!!"

"SORII!!"

Making Metal-san manipulate Sori's body to make her grovel in the dirt, Shuria

stomped down on her back and laughed.

“The rules are simple. Our Metal-san is inside your fuckmaid here, and once Shuria gives the signal, the little guy will start expanding out. Now, you don’t want that to happen, since...”

I intentionally cut off my explanation, and did a quiet chuckle.

“Nooo, please don’t kill me... Hic, uuh.”

“.....”

Sori wept in fear of death, while Yumis was close to doing the same as she imagined what I cut off describing.

“But alas, I am kind. I’ll tell you the one way you can save her. Pour your mana inside the maid. Shuria’s familiar happens to be a magic creature, and those, as you should know, tend to stop working if they get overloaded with mana, don’t they?”

The momentary light of hope on Yumis’ face when I told her that was dyed back into despair just as fast.

Since she realized that she’d used up a lot of that MP during her fight with me.

I then removed her mana sealing shackles.

As for Shuria she also removed her foot off Sori by kicking her away.

“OK, start. Do be careful now, or your dream balloon will get too big and pop.”

“Wh-, n-, please wai-...!?”

“That’s a no♪ There!”

Shuria cut the tape commemorating the start of the game without a care for what Yumis had to say.

“Ah, AaAAAAHHH! Stop, no, STOP IIIT!!! It hurts id hurdsidhrdshh!!”

“SORI!!”

Metal-san started expanding right away, and Sori wailed in pain from having her bones start rupturing from the inside.

Yumis desperately dragged her feet hearing the cries of her beloved, and started her task of filling her with the little remaining mana she had.

“Khhhuuuuuu!!!”

“Ghhhuuu!! Help me, Yumis-sama, id hurds zoo mujj!!”

“You’ll, be fine, I’ll save you right now!!”

Yumis was clearly giving her all in this. However, she was hardly at full strength, and basically, she just didn’t have enough to overload the magic creature that Shuria took lots of time and effort to manifest.

“Ghha, ahhh, AAAHHHH!!!”

Yumis had, as expected, quickly run out, and then began forcibly squeezing out even more mana, something I’d also done once. As a result, lesions started popping up all over her body.

— — But even that wasn’t quite enough.

“Ghh, gah, Ah, AAAH!!”

Sori’s body convulsed violently, her tears mixing with the blood dripping off from Yumis. And then, even that last surge of mana gained at blood price fizzled into nothing.

“No, NonoNOnOnNOOOOO!! I beg you, I BEG OF YOU, oh great hero, Shuria my love, I’m sorry, I was the fool, I’ll do anything I swear, please, pleaseplease forgive me!! Please don’t kill Sori!!”

Yumis pleaded while descending into tears.

That Yumis who despised me, used me, betrayed me, was now in such a deplorable state.

“HAHAHA! Can’t do that, bitch!! *You* said it right, we’re ‘ghosts’, we’re ‘dead’ already,

how are we supposed to listen to living people!”

“Are you mocking us? See here Yumis nee-sama, I *chose* this path to hell just to have my revenge. So... — Please rest assured, you WILL suffer, kyahahahaha!!”

“!!! You, damned, DEEEMOOONNSS!!”

We were beginning to hear the creaks and cracks of Yumis’ dream bursting apart.

“Ah, gahh, uah...”

“Sori!! SoriSoriSori!!”

“Yu mis -sama... a...”

It ended like a water balloon, filled far over capacity.

With a splashing sound, like something that would really make you think about how the human body is mostly water, Sori’s body became nothing but a lump, no, lumps of meat.

“...Eh, ah, e?”

Yumis muttered blankly after that sudden gush of blood got coated all over her.

She could be trying to deny the reality in front of her, or maybe she just can’t fathom what just happened.

The thing called Yumis was, right now, something like a loose house of cards.

So, I went to her, brought my mouth to her ear as she kept sitting there, and said the words I’d been dying to say to her, all this time,

“Hey, Yumis. Just now, just like me, your precious dream, it broke. Just one last time, I want to hear it from your mouth, how does it feel?”



“AAAAAAAHHHHH. NOO NOO NOOO!! WHY, WHY, NOO, WHY, NONONONONOOO!!!”

“AHHHAHAHA!!! YESSH, That’s it, that’s just what I needed Yumis!!”

“Kyahah♪ Cry more, scream more, suffer more!! Loud enough that even mother and Shelmy can hear from heaven, cry, scream!! Kyahahahaha!!”

1 scream to 2 joys.

Ahh, this is it. THIS is it.

This is everything I wanted, and more!!

I live for this, I started life a second time for THIS!!

“Well then, that’d be the end of everything we prepared for you. You’re welcome, Yumis, glad you enjoyed it.”

“Nee-sama, you yourself raised the curtain that started this play. Now we will be the ones to drop it.”

Let’s conclude this charade of idiots and fools.

Shuria and I each took out a simple, unadorned sword from our respective round pouches.

“NO, no, I don’t want this!! This has to be a lie, it’s all fake!! Tell me it’s all fake, tell me!!”

Yumis reeled, scratching at her head like a child throwing a temper tantrum.

She wailed as if to deny anything and everything.

“Ahahah, see ya, Yumis.”

“Farewell, Yumis nee-sama.”

We both raised high our blades of revenge.

“NOOOO-GAHH,Bgh!”

As if we were one of heart, both blades sunk deep into the mage's heart.

“AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!! AHAH, AHAHAHAHA!!”

“KYAHAAH! KYAHHAHAHAHAHA!!”

Again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and againandagainandagaiandagain
—— —.

Within the chilled night air, that one place raged in heat.

My crazed laughter in resonance with that of Shuria's appeared as if we were playing a piano duet together.

We lost track of time and just kept stabbing her.

By the time we stopped, we were only going at what could be called minced meat.

The swords in our hands weren't just covered in ample blood, they even had small chunks of meat sticking to them.



There sat, covered head to toe in the blood of another, a boy who could only be described as unique thanks to his black hair and black eyes, and a girl who looked like a dark skinned elf. They sat together, each leaning their backs on one another.

All around them were meat, blood and fragmented bones in disarray.

There lay a corpse, that is, something that was a corpse, but was now disfigured beyond all recognition as one. One couldn't tell at a glance if that thing was even alive at one point.

“Shuria, your personal revenge should be over with this, so what now? Are you staying here?”

“I can't say I'm fond of such jokes. My revenge won't be over with only this.”

The girl said, pouting,

“The grudge that you and Minnalis-san have shared with me is now mine as well. It’s a fact that the target of my first revenge has been dealt with, but I now have many more. I could say that my revenge has yet to begin even. So no, you will not leave me out of it.”

“Huh, you’re right. Sorry, I said something dumb.”

Within him, the boy now felt a new rage from the girl, one she hadn’t had before.

Though the origin of this hate may be his, what he felt now was fully a part of the girl.

Guess I got a little sentimental now that I had the first of my revenge, whispered the boy as he glanced up to the sky.

“Sure was fun, that. Wonder when I’ll have my next one.”

The girl kept silent at that, but as a reply, leaned just slightly more on the boy.

They dreamed.

They dreamed that someday, they would drag every last person that wronged them into the pits of hell, they dreamed that after that, they would finally rest in peace.

The moon too silently cast its light upon them, accepting them for all they were as dawn arrived.

— —... Their vengeance had yet to end.

For it was a pitch black flame that could even blot out the sun.

Epilogue

That day, every single denizen of Elmia was fraught with tension.

And who could blame them? The research institute that was the town's pride had exploded into fire and rubble, and when they went to douse the flames, swarms of undead started gushing out from the wreckage.

Undead, that is, a type of monster that couldn't at all be called a living creature, were quite an unknown to the gathering onlookers, which escalated their panic.

Then again, the loud explosion did rouse most of the townspeople from their sleep, and along with the clergymen who specialized in Holy or Light magic, the resident adventurers and guards also aided in swiftly bringing the situation under control. To that end, the total souls lost that night turned out to be surprisingly low despite the severity of the disaster.

Relatively speaking, other than the magic tool research institute, Elmia's infrastructure hadn't suffered much damage at all. But it would've been quite a different story had many people died.

Once the chaos had settled down, those in charge of Elmia's governance rushed to the fief lord's manor, demanding to know why they'd been absent all throughout the turmoil. But of course, the lord and his wife hadn't returned from the capital in a long time.

Their daughter, Yumis, was supposed to be the acting lord in her father's place, but when they checked her private mansion, neither she nor any of her servants could be found. The residence had been left completely and utterly vacant.

Elmia as a whole had become very busy. From sending reports to the capital and requesting aid, to treating the wounded, purifying the blighted ruins of the institute, every able body was kept busy.

Some days after,

The fact that the explosion occurred at the very institute that Yumis had been in charge of.

The fact that swarms of undead had crawled out from within.

The fact that their acting lord and governor, Yumis, had disappeared and was nowhere to be found.

Those 3 facts had been circulated to practically all the townsfolk.

The story went as such: Our acting lord Yumis had gone mad with her research, dealing in illegal human experimentation. This foolishness had angered God, and so the Lord sent down judgment, vanquishing the sinful institute and letting loose all the victims that had been made undead as a warning to all. The reason why Yumis had disappeared with all her servants was because she'd used even them in her experiments, herself having died in the initial explosion.

There were other theories, such as Yumis being brainwashed, Yumis being a devilkin, one of her Magic Tools going berserk, et cetera. Rumors, conjectures and theories were flung about everywhere.



I'd gone and spread a wide range of rumors here and there and once I'd come back to town a few days later, I caught ear of a whole smorgasbord of new ones.

Nope, can't beat the human imagination.

I had a good laugh over the one where 'Yumis was replaced by a devilkin doppelganger who killed the original one.'

And after doing a once over on the town that was still out of sorts, we decided to leave for good.

We spent the next 4 days over at Shuria's old village.

The teleportation spell could only last so long, it had stopped when no more mana was left over so technically, we hadn't teleported all the undead here.

I figured we could let them fester here and eventually make their way to Elmia on their own, but this was still Shuria's birthplace. We couldn't just leave it like this.

The three of us spent a few days getting rid of all the undead, and currently, we were

standing right at the center of the long ruined village.

“It’s so strange. 3 years was all it took to ruin it so badly...”

Shuria’s village had been assaulted by Yumis’ soldiers. They’d pillaged and devastated the place so thoroughly that it was hard to believe what laid before us used to be an ordinary, peaceful village.

It actually looked just like how I remembered it from my first run, when I had come here years later from now.

No, maybe it was worse now, since by a few years, the deathly mana would’ve dissipated more.

“The negative mana from undead really speeds up deterioration after all.”

“So then, eventually, this grave marker will be gone too, won’t it?”

Here at the center of the once village, we’d erected a single grave marker. Nobody was actually buried underneath and purple flowers had bloomed sparsely around the memorial.

These were the same flowers Shuria had grown when she once lived here.

Shuria herself was crouching down in front of the grave marker, and looked back and up towards me as she replied.

“Well, it should be fine. There aren’t any more undead here so the bad mana should disappear a lot faster.”

“I see, thank you.”

She replied, currently dressed in a sort of short kimono. The outfit had a classy flower pattern, with colors ranging from deep purple to a stark crimson. It suited her, accentuating her natural charm. In Japan, I guess we’d call it a miniskirt furisode, since the kimono had those extended sleeves.

She'd also done up her hair into a side ponytail, holding it with a flower shaped hair pin.

We'd taken the liberty to pillage this stuff from Yumis' place, and the clothes had a mana activated barrier enchantment on them.

They also had Easy Removal, Automatic Size Adjustment, Heat Retention and Mask Recognition (Human). That last one would serve to disguise Shuria as a typical looking human girl, even from people who knew her and her old appearance.

It essentially worked like Minnalis' illusion spell.

The Elmias must've developed this sort of magic tool to sneak into beastkin or demihuman territory unnoticed.

The Japanese fashion did stick out, but it was a lot better than sticking out as a dark skinned elf, so we ended up taking this. Shuria wasn't going to be facing much in terms of close combat, but for the off chance an enemy gets close, the kimono boasted more defense than even plate mail.

Minnalis and I had also picked out some new gear. Good thing Yumis' family ruled the place, they had storerooms full of all the good stuff just gathering dust.

The equipment from the old man from the weapons shop wasn't bad per se, but the quality was clearly better in a fief lord's stash.

But then... Out of all the pieces of equipment available to her, Minnalis went and chose this frilly maid uniform.

Her rabbit ears poked out from behind the headpiece and her hair was pulled back into a high ponytail.

The whole thing was fluffed out and frilly, while the chest area was made to accentuate size and also focus the attention towards the cleavage.

I must admit, the designer for this outfit did an excellent job balancing both the image of cleanliness, and the erotic appeal of a maid uniform that drives men's hearts wild.



And of course it wasn't simple clothing. An appraisal revealed Increased Defense, Increased Agility, Extra Mana, Augmented Stealth, Augmented Perception, Flexible Garbs, Transform Attire and Heat Retention, which all summed up to me being unable to refuse another flashy outfit. But why all this for a maid uniform? Who knows.

This one also had better defense than your average plate armor, and there wasn't anything that was better either, so in the end, I reluctantly accepted letting her have it.

Both Shuria's and Minnalis' new clothing turned out pretty strange in a fantasy meta sense. Like bikini armors, one of the so called 7 wonders of fantasy, they exist, so there was no helping it.

And yeah, I'd seen lots of women donning such risque defensive apparel on my first run, got used to them even. But how they were somehow better than full body plate, I just didn't get.

As for myself, I picked out a new set of leather armor that looked well enough.

There was higher grade stuff, but I was okay with this. I didn't rely on armor much anyway.

Plus, the rest of the men's armors were all highly ornamented plate mail that just screamed nobility. The weight was one thing, but I flatly refuse to use anything that might deter my movement.

"Ok then, shall we set off?"

"Yes, let's. I'm all done paying my respects."

Shuria nodded with her reply to Minnalis after quietly standing up from her squat.

"....."

"There something wrong, Minnalis?"

"No, it's just, I know this may be rude to Shuria, but seeing this place somewhat reminded me of my old village, you see... I was just thinking how I wanted to turn that place, still infested with walking garbage, into a much worse hell than here. It, well, how should I say this, really fires me up."

She had on a face that expressed equal parts apology for the offense and joy in vengeful fantasy.

The corners of her lips had raised a pinch, giving her expression that slight tinge of darkness.

"Fufufu, I don't mind at all. What I treasure is this place and the people who once lived here, only those. I know you don't mean to see the people important to me in the same way as the filth you mentioned,"

So Minnalis-san, Shuria continued.

"I'm sure your own revenge will be a sight to see. And of course, you can fully count on my assistance."

She declared this smiling in that seductively deadly smile of hers.

Ahh, such a beautiful, reliable pair of accomplices I have.

".....Can't be falling behind now."

I've killed Yumis. The honey of revenge I yearned for all this time, it was sweet, just so sweet.

But, I wanted more, needed more.

She was but the first. And she won't be the only.

Deeper and deeper despair.

Harsher and harsher brutality.

Crueler and crueler agony.

"Goshujin-sama? Is something the matter?"

"Kaito-sama, you're grinning."

"I-It's nothing. Let's go."

My lips naturally curved into a smile.

All to sate my undying vengeance.

My once lit flame of revenge hungered ravenously, it was restless for more.

The scum of the earth was yet aplenty.

They had no idea of the hell we walked on as they drank and laughed.

“Mmh, great weather today. Ah, I just got a good one. We put them in a room, bone dry and scorching hot. Then, we wait till they’re parched and dried up to the point of death, and once they reach the absolute limit, we give them a pitcher full of crystal clear nothing.”

“Goshujin-sama, might I suggest handing them a jug of poison, letting them know it’s poison of course. It could be a test of how long they can resist.”

“Ah, then I’d like to suggest placing a bucket of pig feces in the room. They would slowly get used to the stench and once they can’t bear it anymore, they’d happily...”

The sun was beaming high in the clear blue sky.

Another good day for sweet revenge.

“Gyarrhoooooooo!!!”

And then,

From far up high, a huge shadow passed over us.

“—!!” x 3

All three of us looked up instantly. That piercing roar accompanied by that colossal mass of mana. A massive creature with deep red scales and wings.

A creature that reigns supreme in most any fantasy world.

— — Dragon.

“Wait, that’s...”

“Goshujin-sama?” “Kaito-sama?”

Minnalis and Shuria were making dubious expressions at me, but I had no time for that.

“Guren...”

As it approached closer, I could make out more of its features.

Guren was the name of the small Blaze Dragon I always saw with Leticia. He’d almost always stay in his dragon pup form and lazed around on top of Leticia’s head or on her shoulder.

“—!!”

I couldn’t just stand there anymore. I used Sky Walk and went after the red dragon.

“Gyaruo?”

“Ah...”

And then, when I was at a position where I stood face to face with Guren, I’d finally returned to my senses.

What was I trying to achieve with this?

Guren stared at me suspiciously, likely finding it odd why I was suddenly here.

This dragon wasn’t supposed to meet Leticia until some time later.

This guy would never forgive me if it knew that I’d once failed to save Leticia after all the times she’d saved me.

“Gyaru!!”

“—!!”

It looked like Guren judged me as an annoyance, and started taking in a breath, fire gathering in its maw.

He was getting ready to use his trademark breath skill.

But on the other hand, I didn't want to harm Guren at all, so all I could do in this situation was take as many defensive measures as I could. And in that moment,

“Gyaruu!?”

“Wha!?”

A powerful light burst out from within my chest.

The blinding light caused my vision to see only white, and I felt something leaving my body.

“Huh, what just...”

It felt as if I lost something very important.

And that something, that light went towards Guren, and got itself absorbed into his body.

“Gyah!? Gyaruu!?”

“W-what's wrong...?”

I had no idea what was happening right now. And neither did Guren from the looks of it.

After that, Guren let out a low growl while staring at me for a few seconds. Then, he whipped around his tail, covered in scales tough enough to repel even mythril blades, in an attempt to swat me out of the sky.

“Ukh!?”

I'd instantly instantiated a [Soulblade of Origin] to protect myself, but the sheer

weight and momentum of the scaled appendage knocked me off and away from the foothold I'd made in the air.

I managed to steady myself and safely crash landed, but the situation itself was pretty bad.

Blocking that last attack numbed both my arms and I'd need at least a few more seconds before I could recover.

But the dragon didn't strike me in my weakened state. Guren only let out a snort of what looked like disappointment, and then flew off.

“.....”

“Goshujin-sama!!” “Kaito-sama!!”

Minnalis and Shuria were running over to me, worried.

As for me, I just stared at the sky where the dragon was speeding away.

Side Story

The Hero doesn't Know, but Due Carnage and Subsequent Resolution has been Accounted for

It was the day when my Goshujin-sama would bring the girl called Shuria home.

I had done all my duties for the day, including the making of dinner at the inn's kitchen, a place I was now thoroughly familiar with, and was in the middle of awaiting their return.

"Welcome home, Goshujin-sama. And, it's a pleasure to meet you, Shuria."

"The pleasure is all mine! I believe you must be Minnalis-san?"

The two of us exchanged this first greeting with amiable smiles. I had no doubt that she had at least an inkling as to my goals concerning certain things, yet she showed no weakness such as diverting her gaze.

She exuded a much stronger, more powerful impression than what I'd been told of. Perhaps her recent betrayal was what caused this dramatic change?

I'd been told that she only had traces of elven blood in her, so what was the deal with this odd color of skin? Her ears were still tapered like those of elves, but as far as I knew, elves all had an almost ethereal white skin. Was it really not a reaction due to her rare ancestry?

...No, that couldn't be. In the memories I had transferred over from Goshujin-sama, she was always white, meaning that she'd changed this much only recently.

And while Shuria and I were busy exchanging sparks behind our smiles, Goshujin-sama didn't seem to notice this turbulence in the least. He was being very nonchalant about this, saying things like he was glad we seemed to get along.

Seeing which, I myself felt my murderous intentions subside. It was troubling how I could see this undoubtedly dense side of him and still think it cute.

“Alright, I say we should have dinner now. I have everything ready and waiting.”

I ended the stare-off, proposing that we eat.

I’ll count this match as a draw.



That evening, once the three of us had our stomachs filled and satisfied, it was decided that we would rest for the day and continue on our plans tomorrow.

Goshujin-sama was considerably fond of having a comfortable sleep, so we ended up staying at the expensive inn we were currently at.

With Shuria joining, we moved to a 4 bedroom that was recently vacated. We’d be leaving town by tomorrow anyway, so it was counted as a last indulgence before we go.

I had proposed that I could share the bed with Goshujin-sama without issue, but he got suddenly angry, preaching about how awful it was to sleep while congested.

His face had a slight blush, which told me that it wasn’t as if he entirely disliked the idea of sleeping in the same bed, but I also got the impression that his honest desire was to have a bed he could fully enjoy to himself.

He also had a point that it wasn’t a very comfortable experience having 2 people sharing a 1 person bed.

I was sad. I knew that Goshujin-sama wasn’t genuinely angry at me, but it was still disheartening, having been scolded for the first time.

He finished his lecture saying that sleeping was the one thing he wouldn’t yield on no matter what, no matter how impractical I said it was. I shall take that to heart as my own failure in understanding my Goshujin-sama’s desires. I shall be deeply reflecting on this.

My attempt at being a levelheaded woman had ended up resulting in getting too invasive. An experienced female adventurer had taught me that I shouldn’t be too indulgent to my man lest I run the risk of him running off; Please Miss adventurer, I

need more of your advice! No, I do realize that Goshujin-sama won't run away, but having him come to hate me would be my worst nightmare.

That being the case, Goshujin-sama was currently asleep, his peaceful, utterly defenseless face displayed for my viewing pleasure. And yet, even if I so much as attempt to get close enough to touch it (with the purest of intent mind you), he would instantly open his eyes, sensing the approach as a threat.

My days were those of endurance, having a delicacy presented to me yet unable to touch.

Any other day, I would erase my presence, and without engaging in tactile contact, enjoy the sweet honey for my eyes that was his sleeping face, of course, only enough so I didn't lack in sleep the next day. But today wasn't any other day.

"...Shall we go?" I proposed.

"...Indeed." she assented.

Deep into the night, at a time when the town was sound asleep, the two of them quietly affirmed each others' intentions and left the room.

Goshujin-sama had already told her Shuria's full story. I had also received all of the vengeful memories and emotions held within the dark girl.

A new, black rage swirled in my heart.

It was a rage not at all lacking compared to my own.

So, I had no misgivings about welcoming her as a fellow accomplice. Despite that, once I'd finally met her, looked into her eyes, I knew that there were certain things we needed to discuss on.

And it seemed that she had similar thoughts.

I did consider holding off on what it was we were about to engage in for another night, seeing as she had undergone such a large change that very day, but her eyes told me that no, that was a needless worry.

For what dwelled in those eyes wasn't fatigue in the slightest, but a light that clearly

demonstrated that she was hell bent on exacting her revenge.

Still, the body was something that required due rest, so I would be fine if we postponed this, but again, she didn't seem too tired to handle it.

Outside, I could see a half-moon casting down its rays. The cold night air chilled my skin.

"So," I began, "I don't have any experience dealing with this sort of situation, so I admit, I'm at a loss as to what we should start with..."

"And I am the same in that respect," Shuria complained, "I can't be proud of having participated in a love triangle even if I have."

"As you probably know, my reasons for being Goshujin-sama's accomplice include issues with that sort of relationship."

Thinking about how I met Goshujin-sama put a smile on my face.

"But," I continued, "that doesn't mean I can simply ignore this intrusion."

"Yes, and I expect it. What this is and what you had previously cannot even be compared! And in the first place, that wasn't love, that had no right to be called love. It was a betrayal, and by pieces of trash that never truly loved you in the first place. And love triangles, don't get me started. They're supposed to be so much more pure, and heartfelt, you know? Like in Ballroom of Love, or in The Baron's Garden or even..."

"T-too close, you're too close."

Shuria had started fuming about something different from the subject at hand. She was much more fluid, not only in emotion but also expression, than how Goshujin-sama had described her. Was this an effect of the demonic mana now inside her?

"Anyway," I said, bringing us back on topic, "what we have going on here can hardly be called fighting for a man. We simply can't do that in the relationship we're in."

"I have to agree, it's a predicament."

Yes, this wasn't a scene of carnage resulting from a love triangle, but a short meeting to lay down some rules.

In this 'predicament' of ours, neither of us were able to leave, neither could harm the other, and neither could simply lock away our feelings.

And of course, she was also like me, someone entirely betrayed by her whole world and who had sworn revenge. And an accomplice, and important existence, one of the only who knew the depths of my feelings. It should be the same for her. We were too important to each other to even attempt harm.

And If I couldn't technically beat her, I would have her join me. Honestly, before I met her, I was still holding on to the faint hope that it would be silly to think that any girl my Goshujin-sama happens to pick up will fall for him, but that hope was, as expected, undeniably dashed.

He was the one who would let her achieve her revenge, he was the one person in the world who saved her, and he would even share wholeheartedly in her dark desire.

I was the silly one to think that a girl wouldn't fall when there was so much to fall for.

(And if she hadn't completely fallen for him yet, I would still conduct a meeting like this, by force if I had to. She would be an asset if she were on my side, as an accomplice in our revenge of course, but also in countering the other problem.)

This was an important matter. There was one individual I had to be far more careful of than Shuria here.

"Then again," I said, "our common enemy and rival in love is definitely..."

"It's that demon lord girl. She's so unfair! How in the world are we supposed to compete with the feelings from his first run?"

Shuria stuck out her lips in a very obvious pouting face.

"Don't worry so much. A certain female adventurer who'd drifted into our village once told me this: Men may dream about a far-away girl, but they'll go for the one by their side."

"Such wonderful words of wisdom! We must make him look to us, and only us. Make him fall head over heels for our charms. I've read intensively on how men can be easily swayed by the female flesh!"

“But we need to be careful when we do. If we act too depraved, I know that Goshujin-sama won’t like it. And once he gets feelings of distrust towards us, it’s going to be incredibly hard getting his trust back. We need to do it very gradually, slowly increase the intensity of approach, if you will.”

“Gradually, is it... Yes, I do recall reading on lewd seductresses who never get the man in the end.”

“For now, let’s aim to get to a stage where Goshujin-sama wouldn’t shake us off if we happen to embrace him for no particular reason. And from experience, I can claim that Goshujin-sama is still a man who, despite everything, is still susceptible to a woman’s wiles. Also, I should tell you about MP intoxication. It’s something very easy to use to our advantage, as in, he doesn’t really dislike it if you stick to him in that state. Goshujin-sama just needs a reason to say ‘can’t be helped’ and it just works.”

This, I knew for certain. When I pretend to be drunk on MP potions and start getting all over him, he might treat me a bit roughly, but he won’t dislike it.

I wouldn’t do it if he found it unpleasant, but despite his reluctant expression, his face always gets a tinge of red, which I find incredibly adorable. That sort of Goshujin-sama really gets me going.

“C-can you please explain that in detail...?”

“Let’s see, so I do things like push my chest up against him while acting unawares. I also use my tipsiness to try and force a kiss and such...”

“M-m-my goodness, your chest!? And e-even k-kissing... ahh, ahhh!!!”

Shuria’s dark complexion instantly took on a shade of red. What a cute little thing.

Though this wasn’t quite what I wanted from an accomplice. She seemed not too reliable in that department. Seems she is in need of some traini... I mean, well deserved reeducation.

“You need to be able to handle at least that much without blushing so intensely. Once we get Goshujin-sama to let go of this Leticia-san, we would be the ones to console him. That means going much further than that.”

Yes, like this, if I can keep her on a leash, she’ll eventually begin to look to me for

instruction...

“Y-you’re absolutely right. When that time comes, I’m sure we can get him to ×× ×× on our ×× ××. We might even get him to ×× ×× our ×× ×× with his ×× ×× if we’re lucky.”

“!?”

My breath caught at the words I was hearing.

“Oh oh, and we need to ready some rope, candles, maybe a whip too...”

“!?!?”

“T-truth be told,” Shuria revealed with hesitation, “earlier today, when Goshujin-sama was testing my resolve, he stepped on me hard on the back. I, well you see, I think I’ve awoken to some new inclinations due to that. My heart is beating faster even now as I’m remembering it.”

“!?!?!?”

Shuria was saying all this while fidgeting around all bashful, as if some Lewdness Skill was manifesting inside her.

Th-this was getting out of hand. This little girl’s dark desires were deeper than even mine. N-no, with the love I had for Goshujin-sama, if he desired such things of me, I definitely had the courage to comply.

“I am certain that Goshujin-sama has the qualities of a sadist. He’s the type of person that becomes an uncontrollable animal in bed.”

“A-and you’re sure of that?” I wanted to know her basis for that conclusion.

Although, now that I think on it, I did sometimes feel a sexual gaze from him that sent this sharp chill up my spine, as if a wild carnivore was looking at me as prey...

“Yes, positive even! Even if he planned on only acting cruelly, it certainly wouldn’t devolve into stepping on me like that!! Believe me on this, I am without an inkling of doubt that Goshujin-sama is very sadistically inclined!!”

“I-I think I’m starting to feel like you’re right...”

Her words did ring a few bells.

Goshujin-sama was a gentleman towards me most of the time, but sometimes when I failed in whatever I was doing, he would start teasing me about it. And he always looked incredibly amused when he did.

That teasing laugh of his was different from when he laughed for revenge. And it sort of gave me some shivers when he did that, wait, oh no, was he really...

(N-no, I can't go with her flow on this. I'm supposed to be the one leading her along...)

"A-anyway, let's pause this discussion for now. We'll have a lot to do starting tomorrow, so let's continue on our plans once we're done."

"Huh? Oh, yes, with pleasure!!"

I stepped back into the inn.

This was certainly not my loss, it was a strategic retreat.



Some time later, to further aid their plans on wooing Kaito, Minnalis and Shuria had secretly stolen a number of articles of a particular sort of literature which they would study together diligently.

Their *levels* were rising, now more than ever before.

Side Story

Mad for the Far Away Hero 1

Why, Why, Why.

Even till the very end, Kaito-sama's heart had remained imprisoned by that Devil.

Even when *I'm* the one who loves you most.

Even when *I'm* the one you should've loved the most.

Even when *I'm* the one most worthy of you.

But I'm, not the one beside you.

And you're, not the one beside me.

Why, do you shed tears for that Devil.

Why, does your heart break for that Devil.

Why, do you desire that Devil.

If only you had desired me, I would've have given you my body, my soul, my everything.

Of course, if only that Devil was gone, Kaito-sama would finally open his eyes.

For he is the one destined to vanquish that Devil. And I, am the one who'd stand closest to him as he did.

I can still remember the joy from when I learned of that destiny. I can still remember the despair of having that destiny defiled.

Which was why I thought everything would be resolved once that Devil, the defiler of my destiny, was killed.

And after that, all was supposed to have returned as it should be.

Because Kaito-sama had used his own blade to cut away the chains that had enraptured him.

...And yet. And yet and yet!

By then, it was all too late. The cursed fragments of those chains had buried themselves deep, deep into his heart, his soul forever unclean, defiled.

I had no choice but to accept that fact.

So the least I could do was free that dirtied soul. Even that stolen, tarred, corrupted soul would surely be purified by the grace of God, and surely he and I would meet again in our next lives.

For I am the Saintess, and Kaito-sama is the Hero.

And so, I learned that God had granted my dearest wish.

The mistaken world was now no more, and when I realized that, I wept, I shed tears of utmost joy.

This time will be different. This time, I will not fail.

This time, I will become your one and only, I will be the one to fully occupy your soul.

Please, please wait for me.

My beloved, my Hero.



As the coach rattled along the dirt road, I, Meteria Loreria, felt slightly fatigued from the journey.

(It's because I'd gotten used to riding the unshaking carriage Kaito-sama had created.)

In the previous world, I could only marvel at its genius, and I recall seeing him talk to the merchant Avars about its technical aspects, I now regret not asking for those

details myself.

I'd been sitting on this stiff coach seat for so long that my buttocks were numb from the constant vibrations.

I used to heal to secretly alleviate the numbing pain during breaks in the journey. I was, after all, still the sheltered bird of a woman at the present time. I may remember the experiences I had in the previous world, but I clearly wasn't as fit as I had been.

My adventures with Kaito-sama during which I increased my level and proficiencies in Holy Magic and Water Magic had all turned to nothing.

It was extremely disheartening to lose the fruits of my special training with my beloved.

Then again, we simply had to do it over, together of course. In fact, with the knowledge I have in my possession, he and I could crush all of our wretched foes on our own. Yes, we won't need other 'companions' who would only get in the way of our love.

He only required me, and I him.

"...phew," I sighed, "It's also been so long since I've seen this country."

"Pardon? You've *seen* it?" said the maid at my side as she cocked her head in confusion.

I had leaked an expression of nostalgia when I looked out the coach window to see the tall walls that enclosed Aurel, the royal capital of the kingdom of Aurelia.

Silly me. It should be my first time coming to this country, so of course, she'd question my words.

"It's nothing. I simply mistook it for something else." I spoke a tad coldly so she wouldn't ask any more questions.

But then, the simple maid who knew nothing of my circumstances looked shocked and even a little scared. I felt sorry for that, so I spoke to her softly,

"You know, I'd definitely need to enjoy some calming tea once I'm done with my greetings. You should join me. I'd find it lonely to have tea alone after all."

I gently smiled to her so that she would calm her nerves, and seeing that, the maid's cheeks reddened slightly as she stuttered a 'Y-yes, m'lady!' her voice higher than normal.

I then returned my gaze to the approaching city outside.

I recall hearing that at this point in time, Kaito-sama had still remained in the capital and was in the process of improving his skills within the nearby Goblin's Nesthole, a newly forming dungeon.

Soon, Soon, Soon——...

I understood that impatience wasn't going to let me meet him any faster, and I gripped the ends of my robes to bear with my overflowing desire, causing them to wrinkle.

(Kaito-sama, this time, this time for you, I, only I will be by your side...)

Right now, Right now, Right now.

I had to see him right now, I needed his eyes to gaze upon me, his voice to call my name, his laugh to soothe my ears.

This time, I will not let that vile Woman approach my Hero, I will not let her seduce him, dirty him.

"Leticia Lew Harston..."

It felt sick just remembering that evil name.

She had barged herself into my Kaito-sama's kind, gentle heart, enslaved his soul, stolen the place I was destined to be.

She won't be given the chance to this time. In the previous world, I had ended up meeting my beloved only after she had sown her malignant seeds into his soul, but this time, this world will not be the same.

I will be the one to soothe his distressing heart, only I and no other. That is the only way.

"Me-Meteria-sama, are you sure you're alright?" the maid cried.

It appears that my thoughts had been showing on my expression.

“You may be right,” I said, “I suppose that I’d finally relaxed now that we’re so close to our long awaited destination. I might be feeling a bit ill from the ride.”

“M-my word,” exclaimed the maid, “we must stop to rest at once...”

“Kusukusu,” I giggled “You worry too much. We’ve almost arrived. I might as well rest in town.”

I could understand why the maid is so fussy about my well being. In our theocracy, the Saintess holds a position equivalent to royalty. And not simply as a figurehead. As a Saintess I had a strong say over matters regarding the country and as a subordinate, the maid would have to try everything to prevent someone of my post from feeling ill at ease.

That being said, I couldn’t simply disclose the truths only I knew, so to calm my turbulent heart, I reached into my bag and brought out my favorite doll.

This doll was small enough to rest amply on top of my cupped hands. It had pitch black hair and wore a dark robe.

I lovingly fondled my doll as if it were him, my sweet beloved.

(Soon, my Kaito-sama. I’m finally coming to meet you.)

And like that, my heart once again regained calm.

I smiled softly as the coach reached ever closer to the city, simply caressing my cherished doll.

Some time after, we had entered the gates.

The royal capital was a crowded place. At a glance, the city was less orderly than the holy capital of our Lunaria theocracy but more boisterous and lively.

In a few months from now, Kaito-sama will have conquered the dungeon he was now exclusively using to train, and it would be opened to the public. Once that happens, it’s sure to get even more crowded.

(Well, I'll be joining him soon enough, so it might not even take those few months.)

I looked over at the grand castle from my window as the coach drove along through the town.

(I'll have to convince princess Alesia first. And if she tries to be uncooperative, I can use the fact that they had secretly summoned the Hero as a card in my negotiations. They likely won't make it easy for me.)

I began constructing my strategy while poking the soft cheeks of my Kaito-sama doll.

(The only others who know about the summoning should be the royal knights led by Captain Ryuudos. If I don't lay the groundwork beforehand, those rotten royals will definitely try to attach 'companions' that will interfere with Kaito-sama's journey together with me.)

This time, this time, the Hero, Kaito-sama, and the Saintess, I, will consummate our destined love.

I will stand victorious. With my knowledge of the previous world, I can easily crush any existences that seek to harm Kaito-sama, be it the princess or any other.

In fact, him and I would defeat our every foe together, thus strengthening our bond further.

"Fufufu!" I laughed.

"Meteria-sama, I see you're feeling well again." the maid commented. "Thanks goodness."

"Yes, I'm fine now. Thank you for your concern."

"Still, it's been a long journey. Please have some rest after your greetings with his Majesty. It'd be terrible if you were to fall ill due to fatigue."

As I once again thanked the maid for her concern, I noticed my pulse rising.

Kaito-sama was here, in this town, so close yet so far.

I had spent many heartbroken days aiming for his life, wishing only to save his soul. It was a necessary step to purify him, and I knew that. But that moment when the sword

was stabbed in his chest, I had felt heart wrenching pain as if it had pierced my own. It was a pain I could never forget.

Days and days of my beloved directing hateful eyes at me, my own hate for the long dead demon lord multiplied.

But those days were no more.

For I had now received the opportunity to right that wrong, and advance towards the correct future.

“Fufu” I grinned in joy, imagining the path to my destiny.

「正しい物語を取り戻すために……」

止めるものもなく、

清廉な水はただ流れ続ける。

聖女
メテリアニローレリア

MATERIA LAURELIA

Side Story

Mad for the Far Away Hero 2

“Alesia-sama, how do you fare?” Said the man who entered my room. He had a face riddled with battle scars and looked to be in his late twenties. His name is Guidott, said to be the strongest knight of the kingdom, and currently captain of our knight’s order.

He had both an appearance and personality that revealed a plethora of experience on the battlefield, and he had a tone of voice that has become coarse and low over the years. The presence of such a man was in complete contrast with the lavish room of one such as I, a princess.

Well, that matters not in the least, not at present.

“Yes, Guidott, I feel fine. The pain has fully gone, and fortunately, there had been no curse set on me when the necklace was removed.”

A week prior, the researchers that had been called over from Elmia had finally unraveled the mystery behind my prized necklace. They had discovered that the reason that prized ornament was causing me such suffering and misfortune was not due to any curse but something different.

That royal treasure originally had 4 enchantments: Automatic HP Recovery, Minor Increased Healing, Perfect Memory and Minor Regeneration. But the first 3 of those enchantments had been exchanged with Inferior Reverse Healing, Hinder Removal and Disrupt Perception.

Reverse Healing is a form of recovery magic that returns bodily wounds to their original state to heal them.

Ordinarily, healing spells accelerate the healing process to recover HP and stop bleeding. They don’t completely heal the body. That is to say, while they can handle minor flesh wounds, deeper injuries, when healed, tend to leave lasting scars. Recovering from amputation is thus impossible in that regard. If an arm or leg gets lopped off, recovery magic won’t grow them back, and neither can it reverse the loss

of blood. And if a wound is left bleeding, one's HP will drop until death.

Reverse Healing, on the other hand, takes a different approach. It's a magic that turns back the clock on wounds, and depending on how long the user's mana lasts, it can even be used to regrow limbs. For this reason, wounds healed in reverse leave not a single scar, and the body is returned to a state before the wounds were even received. But the large setback of this magic comes in the form of pain. While serving its purpose of returning the body to its rightful condition, the nature of the magic requires the user to endure the pain of having to relive their injuries.

Even if a wound is mostly healed through conventional means, this magic will rip and tear the flesh and return that past wound to its most hideous state before returning skin to skin. But the inevitable pain would end instantaneously if the effects of this magic were dealt fast enough. Unfortunately for me, the necklace had Inferior Reverse Healing. The rate of recovery was abysmally slow, having me endure harsh pangs of pain from my back, night after night.

Disrupt Perception, another of the changed enchantments, almost entirely prevented me from performing my social duties as a princess. I was made unable to utter the names of people I should and do know. As a result, I had to stay cooped up in the castle so that knowledge of this weakness wouldn't spread. Simply removing the necklace would have nullified those atrocious enchantments, but alas, Hinder Removal absolutely barred me from taking it off by physical means.

In the end, it couldn't be removed, and they had to channel an enormous volume of mana into the ornament to destroy it, enchantments and all. Which was most regrettable, as that necklace was a historical treasure passed down through generations of royalty. Disregarding its monetary value, it was also an item that proved one's right to the throne.

On that topic..."Tell me, Guidott. Have they finished repairing my necklace?"

"We're having the most prominent artisans in the capital work on it as we speak. I trust they will be done in a matter of days. The enchantments however..."

"Yes, I know. Those were ancient spells from the time of our nation's founders. I do not expect them to work miracles."

I knew that it wasn't possible, I really did. But as I sat there, hearing the report, my

hands still balled tighter atop my knees. That necklace was a priceless treasure that proved my right of succession, yes, but it was so, so much more. It reminded me of my dearly departed elder sister. It had been her's once.

Now, that necklace had been destroyed due to being flooded with mana. And though I've ordered it be restored exactly to its previous appearance, the fact would remain that it had been broken, after generations of safekeeping.

"...No, I'm sure they're trying their hardest. Please tell them to at least make the appearance indistinguishable from the original." I spoke calmly, not letting my emotions surface in my voice. I felt that I would order their immediate execution if I were to become too agitated.

I've known Guidott for a long time. He has been a familiar face ever since my childhood. But even to him, I cannot show any weakness. Because I am Alesia Aurelia, princess of the kingdom of Aurelia and rightful heir to its throne.

Furthermore, Guidott was originally my elder sister's knight. He is no doubt equally as angry as myself from the fact that his once mistress' treasured necklace had been ruined.

"By your will, princess." Guidott said with a crisp salute.

"Now then, I don't suppose you came here just to check up on my health? State your business."

We may've been close acquaintances, but that is no excuse to enter the room of a princess. He was a busy man too. Someone like him visiting a lady of my position, alone and without cause would only serve to spark rumor. Guidott was most definitely not that oblivious, of that I am sure.

"Yes, I've come to report my findings. It concerns the boy with black hair and eyes. My apologies your highness, but he has indeed fled the capital. I've run a fine comb search with both above and *under* ground means, but we still don't know his whereabouts."

"Right. But surely that is not all?"

"It isn't. I also have witness reports stating they've seen a boy of his caricature. He seemed to have changed clothes, but we have a trail of him within town. He had made frequent trips to the slum and black market areas and we know the inn he stayed at.

We lost all trace of his activities a few days after.”

“I take it that there are no records of him leaving the castle town either?”

“Yes, I suspect that he fled through some means other than the town gates. During the summoning, the soldiers accompanying you may’ve been incompetents but they didn’t lack in Level. Which is to say, the boy has strength beyond what his appearance suggests.”

“...That incident with the outer wall collapsing, the monster outbreak. What were they called, wall eaters? You don’t suppose he used that chaos to make his getaway?”

“The knights who rushed to the scene did not report anyone matching his appearance. But even we only recently learned that that section of the wall had been patched up with inferior materials. So considering how soon the incident happened...”

“What, so you’re saying it’s possible that *monster* from another world deliberately destroyed the wall? That he picked the spot our eyes were not focused on and made his escape from there?”

One of the most heinous crimes one could commit is destruction of a town’s fortifications, its defensive walls. And that monster had done that to our royal capital. It would be far too coincidental that he just *happened* to be at the place where the wall collapsed and used the situation to flee. It’s much more likely that he himself was the perpetrator.

(Still... no, his very existence has been an abnormality from the start. He never deserved the title or power granted to the Hero. He is a failed summon, a monster in human skin.)

I shook away those errant thoughts and brought the conversation back to Guidott.

“*Haah*, it’s frankly ridiculous. The legends say that the Hero is supposed to possess a set of initial skills that grant him limitless potential, but even then, he shouldn’t have been strong from the start...”

“One can’t say very much about the veracity of legends. I for one firmly believe only what I’ve seen with my own eyes.”

“...that is a good point.”

(I will not be able to receive the Great Spirit's words for a while longer. If only I possessed as much spiritual aptitude as my elder sister. Then surely I would be able to receive more frequent oracles.)

I thought back to my sister again. It's no exaggeration to say that she was loved by the Gods. She was a genius in every sense of the word.

"...There are still too many unknowns in this matter. Continue the investigation and keep me informed." I ordered Guidott. "And be sure to keep it under wraps. I don't need anyone sticking their nose where it doesn't belong."

"As you will, your highness." the man saluted. "Also, the emissary from the theocracy has arrived. Please make your preparations to receive them."

Oh right, *she* should've arrived by now.

"The Saintess of Lunaria Theocracy. I would've never imagined that she'd come here personally..."

The Lunaria Theocracy is, as the name suggests, a nation ruled under religion. Their God, Lunaris, has 3 main precepts: Judgement for all evil, Paradise for the children of the earth, and Salvation for the weak and feeble. With these 3 main ideas, and many smaller ones, this religion is currently the most widespread in the whole continent.

There are of course a variety of other, smaller faiths, but Lunaris is the only one that has propagated to the national level. And as it is a country, naturally, politics are involved. Wholesome it may be, but even religion cannot cleanse the dirty quagmire of human government.

"I've heard the reports on how she allegedly appeased all the factions, but frankly, it's not something I can readily believe. She may be able to perform her duties as Saintess perfectly, but her as a politician? I have my doubts."

The Saintess of the Lunaria Theocracy, Materia Laurelia, is said to be the living symbol of that nation. Her virtuous and pure image certainly made her popular with the masses, but naturally, she too would have enemies in the grander power struggles. The Pope, topmost man in the theocracy's chain of command, had fallen ill earlier this year, and the Saintess, Materia could not possibly choose to leave her country while her position remained unstable.

“However, they did inform us that the Saintess herself would be coming. They regretfully left out the subject matter, but as a person of her level of influence has officially requested an audience, it is in our best interest to oblige.”

“True. Well, I can decide what she wants and how to deal with her when I’ve seen her for myself. If you find any time, collect information on the Saintess as well.”

“As you will, Alecia-sama. It is about time now, please be ready to meet the emissary in the audience room.”

“I am meeting the theocracy’s Saintess, Materia-sama after all. I must look my best. As you go, call in my dressing maid.”

“Very well, your highness. I shall be off now.” Guidott made one last salute before exiting my chambers.

Soon after, there was a knock on my door, and the voice of an older woman called from the other side, *Milady, may I enter?*

“You may.” I assented, and the maid who came inside helped me get dressed. All the while, I kept pondering about what could possibly compel the Saintess herself to come to our country.



“A pleasure to meet you, King Eudras Aurelia, and the Queen and Princess.” Spoke a young lady that exuded the very essence of purity with long platinum silver hair braided into a single, defined plait that hung softly over her right shoulder.

Aurelia Kingdom. Currently, at the grand audience hall.

Her beauty was such that I found it difficult to describe with mere words. Her religious vestments which would’ve ordinarily made her look modest only accentuated the lines of her body. Her breasts, were very large.

They bulged out from under her robes as if contesting any force that would dare push them down.

Yet, the soft look in her eyes and her delicate facial features, all in all, prevented one

from garnering any lewd thoughts. Instead, she gave off the feeling of a graceful mother watching over her children.

The knights standing guard around the room had had their eyes stolen by her figure, yet none of them held any carnal desires towards the ephemeral lady. She was the very definition of a flower above one's reach. The lady before us possessed the magnanimity of a saint as well as a soothing, maternal warmth.

"Allow me to introduce myself, I am Materia Laurelia. I have been blessed to have received the title of Saintess in my country, the Lunaria Theocracy." She put her hands together in a gesture of prayer. "May the blessings and salvation of Lunaris be upon you."

She didn't seem to be using any magic but she seemed to have an aura of holy light around her. I've heard that she is only 2 years older than me, but she had a distinct air of maturity that I had yet to arrive at.

"Mm, Lady Materia," the prime minister who was standing beside the king took a step forward to address the Saintess, "Your letter said that you wished to deepen the friendship between our countries, but what specifically might you have in mind? We've renewed our trade agreements just last year, have you found an issue pertaining to the terms?"

It seems like Father and the prime minister believe that she's come here to negotiate the details of last year's grain trade agreement with Lunaria.

"No," the Saintess slowly shook her head, "I am not here for such small matters."

The prime minister was shocked to find that his prediction of the other nation's motive were not only wrong, but even downplayed as insignificant by the other party.

I felt the same, but I was above showing it on my face. Having been taught about kingdom related matters including the importance of unions and agreements with our neighbours, the Saintess' comment about it being a *small matter* quickly lowered my expectations and opinion of the lady.

But as I was about to mark her down as incompetent, she dropped an announcement that left all of us speechless:

"I am here in this country not as a Representative of Lunaria, but as the Saintess of

Lunaria.”

The royal family, the knights on guard, the prime minister, and even the maids who had knowledge of diplomacy were all at a loss for words. Those in the know felt dread at how much this woman might know, while others silently chewed on what this declaration might mean.

“What do you mean to say?” it was not the prime minister but my father who directly asked the Saintess. He had gone pale and had broken out in a cold sweat.

“Oh my, will it be fine to reveal it here?” The Saintess spoke with a knowing smile.

Now, everyone who knew the secret had come to a single conclusion.

———..... The Saintess knows that the Hero has been summoned.

The Saintess of the Lunaria Church which adheres to the doctrine of vanquishing all evil had come to our kingdom not for a political reason, but a religious one. On the surface at least. Now, the only religious reasons a Saintess would personally need to travel for would be for requesting funds for missionary work or, more importantly, for the Hero Summoning Ritual.

And if she had come to request the former, would she have said “*will it be fine to reveal it here?*” No, she wouldn’t, as requesting aid requires no need for secrecy. What she was coyly implying she shouldn’t reveal was the fact that the Hero summoning was done without their knowledge or participation.

The Hero summoning was done to counteract the encroachment of the demonkin, but for the Lunaria Church, the Hero is an existence just as important as the Saintess. They’re very likely to accuse us with trying to monopolize the Hero if they learn of our secret endeavour.

But then, we *were* trying to monopolize the Hero. We had planned to train and manipulate the initially weak Hero into our pawn. Later, we could easily make the excuse that we could not let the demonkin know of the Hero when he was at his weakest, so this was a measure we had to take. At that stage, they would be hard pressed to point fingers.

But our situation, as it stands, is very bad. The Hero we summoned is a madman and sees the kingdom as his bitter enemy. After how he brutalized myself and so many

knights, we would be insane to think that he is anything but hostile.

If the events that transpired were to become public knowledge, the royal family would receive a serious blow. One that could leave us defenseless if our neighbouring nations decide to sanction against us.

“...All here other than the prime minister and knight captain are to leave us.” Father declared.

“S-sire?” “But we can’t...” Some tried to protest.

“Now. That is an order.”

Those not in the know were deeply flustered by Father’s sudden decision, but followed their king’s order and left the hall.

“You should leave as well.” the Saintess said to her attendant maid.

“B-but Materia-sama, I-”

“You need not worry, I will be fine.”

“...Yes, Milady. I shall abide by your will.” The attendant bowed and also left.

As the last of the unrelated parties were removed, the door to the audience hall was closed to maintain privacy. Now, the only ones remaining were Father, Mother, myself, Baras the prime minister, Guidott the knight captain, and the Saintess.

Father and the prime minister had become sparse of words, not knowing to what extent this woman knows. Does she only know that the Hero had been summoned or does she also know about the heinous acts he committed after being summoned?

“Let us begin then, shall we?” The Saintess broke the frozen air. “I am informed about what the kingdom has done. So without further ado, let us discuss the matter of he with black hair and black eyes. I of course speak of the Hero.”

All except for the speaker herself gulped. I suddenly felt anger boiling up within myself. The simple act of being reminded of that monster made me furious.

In contrast, Father looked dispirited, or rather, he’d given up putting on airs.

The Saintess having knowledge of the Hero's distinctive features means that she has confirmation of his sightings outside the castle. She, at the very least, knows that the Hero has made himself an enemy to the kingdom. We would go nowhere attempting to hide that fact now.

"...Right. Lady Materia, what are your demands then?" Father said finally.

I mentally clicked my tongue hearing Father speak as if there was no more room for negotiation.

It's too soon to give in. I know that Father isn't the sharpest when it comes to political discourse, but we must stay firm in negotiations no matter how inevitable our loss. If not, we might lose more than we bargained for.

"I request that the kingdom not interfere with the time I spend with my dear Hero. I, as the Saintess, am destined to be one with the Hero, as you know." The Saintess smiled like a blooming flower, in complete contrast to Father's gloom.

I first felt relieved that she didn't demand anything costly, but upon processing her words, I felt a sense of unease toward the lady.

I simply could not comprehend what sort of personality this Saintess would have to have for her to be smiling so affectionately despite knowing of the Hero's atrocities.

According to the Lunaria faith, the Saintess is a woman who is to be bonded to the Hero and soothe his heart. As such, she must be the very picture of compassion. However, no matter how strongly she may believe her role to be honorable, I could not empathise with someone who could unhesitatingly say that she loves that vile otherworldly creature.

But from how she's wording herself, I understood that even she didn't know the Hero's exact whereabouts.

"Apologies lady Saintess, as of now, even the kingdom does not know of his whereabouts. We have information on his brief period of activity in the castle town, but none whatsoever of where he's gone."

(Father, please try to reign in that loose tongue, this is ridiculous...)

I bit my lower lip at how easily Father was divulging information we could've used to

our advantage. But surprisingly, the one who showed the most drastic change in expression from the revelation was,

“...Eh?” The Saintess herself. Likely, she had found this fact so outside of her expectations that she completely neglected to maintain her outer calm.

Father didn't seem to notice that, and continued speaking.

The royal faction has been losing power in recent years so he must be thinking it unwise to make an enemy of the theocracy. Our plan had been to reign in the anti-royalists by showing off our control of the Hero, but that evidently ended in failure.

Thus, Father likely wants to reveal everything we know about the Hero in order to bury the hatchet with the theocracy.

“From the atrocious state of my daughter and many knights after the Hero assaulted them, we had initially been led to believe that he was a savage madman with strength beyond his control.” Father explained. “But seeing as how he's been able to elude us thus far, it seems he is no mere barbarian. From the words he left behind, we can assume that he plans to cause trouble eventually. We believe it may be more productive to wait for him to reveal himself. Of course, we have not laxed on our search, but with only his black hair and eyes as unique features, it has been difficult.”

“By words he left behind?” The Saintess inquired.

“He said 'I refuse to be your pawn. Let those scars on your back be proof of that. I can, and will do worse. I will take everything from you. And there will be no mercy from my revenge, this time.'”

Father's words made the wounds on my back, which were now fully healed, burn up in phantom pain. Once again, rage boiled inside me. And once again, I showed not a hint of it on the surface.

“I do not know if the theocracy possesses further details, but I am certain that he will act soon. And when he does so, we can be prepared to capture him.” Father finished with a sigh.

“...is time? ... can't be, ... why, ... but, no.”

“Lady Materia? Is something the matter?”

The Saintess showed more reaction to the Hero's message than even I on whom it was torturously carved on. She paid no heed as Father called to her. Her breathing hastened and her face had a dark expression as she looked down and started mumbling in a quiet voice.

Was she so aghast because of the news that the Hero is missing?

".....then,..... oh,..... Leticia Lew Harston!"

All of us were shocked. The Saintess' calm demeanor had crumbled and she was audibly grinding her teeth in frustration. I felt a chill run up my spine as I saw the lady display intense rage.

"Lady Materia, lady Materia." Father called strongly. "Is everything alright?"

There was a pause.

".....Pardon me, I am fine." The Saintess raised her face and put on her usual smile. "I seem to have been more fatigued from my travels than I realized. I humbly request a continuation of this discussion at a later day, would that be agreeable?"

She may be smiling, but the difference from before, from that smile like a blooming flower, was like night and day. The contrast was apparent to everyone present.

"I, see." Father said stiffly. "Very well. We can't have the Saintess fall ill in our country after all. Let us put this off for another day."

With that, the Saintess made a gesture of prayer in spite of her abnormal condition and with a bow, she also took her leave from the audience hall.

(Leticia Lew Harston?)

I was unable to make out most of what she'd said, but I heard the name she spoke at the end very clearly. I felt a strange unease from that name I didn't know.



"Aaaaaaahhhh!! Ahhh, Uggghh, uhhuu, Aaaahh!!"

Inside the guest chamber prepared for Milady, mad wails echoed. The Saintess, as if

she'd gone off the deep end, took out her boiling frustrations on the lavish bedding.

"Why! Why! WHY!! How much, will you taint, my Hero, before you're, satisfied!! Demon! Demon! DEMON!!" Milady gripped and raised her pillow, and thrashed it on her sheets in rage.

I was assigned as the Saintess' attendant not long before we left Lunaria to come to this kingdom, so I cannot say that I know Milady well enough to understand her. However, I have never seen or heard of such behavior for the esteemed lady, this anger, no, a furious rage is what this is.

"Why did this happen!? Why, why was my dear Hero's soul corrupted by her, even in this new world!? This isn't how it's supposed to be! Not this soon! I should have had time to save him this time!!"

"M-Materia-sama?" I hesitated, "Is there anything I can help with?"

This was a Saintess unknown to me. I trembled on the inside, but still ventured to ask if I could be of use. In the first place, I haven't a clue as to why the Saintess had been angered so. I regret leaving her alone in that audience hall.

"That woman! Witch! You dare dirty my, my dear, my *dear*...!! Uuuuuuu!!" Cried the Saintess, not paying any heed to my presence.

"Materia-sama..."

I could only watch on as Milady thrashed about in anguish.



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